



On your marks

Joseph was Jacob's favourite son, and he was spoilt and a show-off. His long-sleeved, many-coloured coat set him apart from his eleven brothers - and gave him permission not to get involved with the family business of shepherding. He was also a dreamer, which led to jealousy and anger from his brothers and a plot to kill him.

Get set

This feature-length Old Testament story raises lots of interesting questions:

- How do we deal with jealous feelings towards others?
- What do we do when our anger gets the better of us?
- Does God still speak to people through dreams?
- Are we simply victims of heredity and the way we have been brought up, or can we change for the better?

Joseph lost his mum when he was a teenager and was given special treatment by his doting dad. He told tales on his brothers and wasn't really a nice person to know... and yet God does not give up on him!

This outline offers a way to tell the first part of Joseph's story. For storytelling ideas for the other parts of Joseph's story, see [The story of Joseph - the prisoner](#) and [The story of Joseph - the prime minister](#).

You will need:

- something colourful to represent Joseph's special coat
- a set of coloured pieces of felt or other light material to tell the story - for the colours needed, see the outline below

You can find a retelling of the story from Genesis 37 in The Barnabas Children's Bible (stories 30 and 31).

Go!

Today, we are going to explore one of the biggest family stories in the Bible. It's a story of: pride and jealousy; anger and intrigue; despair and hope; dreams and visions; surprises and mysteries.

Opening up the story

Get everyone into groups and invite them to walk around in different styles - marching, slow motion, tiptoeing, hopping, jumping, walking backwards, skipping... When you say 'freeze', everyone should

freeze their action as a statue. Get everyone into the 'family' groups suggested below as quickly as possible:

- three children, one adult
- two boys, two girls, one adult
- four boys or four girls, two adults
- three children (boys or girls) under 7, three children (boys or girls) over 7, as many over 11 as you can find

Adjust the size and make-up of the groups as needed depending on the people you have available.

Families come in all shapes and sizes and the one we're going to talk about was big! There were twelve boys, some girls, two mums, two stepmums and a dad. It was a mixed up, messed up family in lots of ways, just like all families can be from time to time, but they were loved and looked after by God, even though lots of bad, strange and amazing things happened.

Let's see what this family looks like. (If you have enough children and adults, then create the family as suggested below. Alternatively, you could use symbols/objects such as peg dolls, counters or even draught pieces.)

- Chose five adults or older children to be Jacob, Rachel, Leah and the two other mums
- Choose ten children to represent ten of the sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar and Zebulun)
- Introduce Joseph with his amazing coat, explaining why he was the favourite
- Introduce one other child to be baby Benjamin

It was a rainbow family of different types of people with different stories, different dreams and different hopes.

Introduce the set of colours linked to Joseph's special coat. Ask everyone what their favourite colours are and maybe explore feelings and thoughts that go with some of these colours, as in the following outline story that uses colours to describe the story.

Telling the story

God had blessed Jacob and his two wives. Between them they had twelve children: ten children on Leah's side of the family and two on Rachel's side. But Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah and so her first son, Joseph, was his real favourite.

Gold: Joseph was Jacob's golden boy and he used to parade around, showing off the many-coloured, long-sleeved coat that Jacob had given him.

Green: This made all the other brothers very jealous.

And what was worse, Joseph was a dreamer: he dreamt when he slept and his dreams were all about



how special he was.

Yellow: In one dream, eleven yellow bundles of corn all bowed down to his bundle of corn. It was obvious what that meant!

Another yellow, a white and a cream: In another dream, the sun, the moon and eleven stars all bowed down to him. It looked like the whole family, even his mum and dad, would bow to him one day. That really...

Brown: ... browned everyone off!

Jacob once sent Joseph to take some food for his brothers as they were working hard many miles away looking after the sheep.

Three shades of red: When they saw him coming, they got angrier and angrier and angrier: 'Look here comes the dreamer.'

Black and blue: They grabbed him and punched him black and blue.

Purple: He was bruised all over.

They wanted him dead. But one of the brothers decided that wasn't right and suggested they throw him...

Dark gray: ... into a deep well instead.

He had plans to rescue him later but instead they saw...

Brown and sandy colour: ... camels coming across the desert. They were traders and so they sold Joseph as a slave and he was taken to Egypt.

Bring all the colours together: The brothers took Joseph's special coat and dipped it in some goat's blood and...

Scarlet: ... with its extra blood red colour, took it back to Jacob and said that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

Jacob was heartbroken. His favourite son was dead as far as he knew, and life would never be the same again.

This looked like the end of the story, but it wasn't! God was with Joseph and his plans for Joseph had not come to an end.