



On your marks

It seems that everything is perfect for Joseph now. He is a favourite again – not his dad’s favourite but Pharaoh’s! He has riches and fame and a happy life. He’s in charge of all the corn supplies for Egypt so that they can be stored away when harvests are good so they have enough for everyone to survive when things are bad. Joseph is:

- the corn king
- the grain guru
- the famine fighter
- the Hebrew slave made good
- Pharaoh’s fair-deal favourite

He did a great job. But was he happy? He knew he wasn’t Egyptian, and he knew that all the Egyptian gods weren’t real. He still knew that there was only one true God. He couldn’t help remembering home even if he tried to forget. He couldn’t stop thinking about his dad and his family – even his brothers, however much he tried to make a new start. And God hadn’t finished with Joseph yet. He had changed in the recent years but God still had a very special job for him to do.

Get set:

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

- Is it ever possible to forgive those who have hurt us?
- Do people really change?
- How can God turn bad into good?

To his brothers’ amazement, Joseph says the following to those who wanted him dead: ‘Don’t worry or blame yourselves for what you did. God is the one who sent me ahead of you to save lives’ (Genesis 45:5, CEV).

For storytelling ideas for the other parts of Joseph’s story, see [The story of Joseph - the peacock](#) and [The story of Joseph - the prisoner](#).

You will need:

- two hessian bags – one full of seed to represent corn (maybe sunflower seeds or packed full but with wood shavings on the top to resemble corn) and one empty
- some small bags of money
- a special metal cup like a chalice

You can find a retelling of the story from Genesis 43-46 in The Barnabas Children’s Bible (stories 34 and 40).



Go!

Today, we're going to find out what happened next for Joseph – or as the Egyptians called him, Zaphenath-paneah, which means the one who is alive to God's voice.

Opening up the story

1. Act out the story so far by inviting the group to walk around acting out the following:

being the most important person – Joseph's the favourite

stomping around with anger – his brothers are jealous

riding camels across the desert – Joseph is taken away as a slave

marching like soldiers – Captain Potiphar buys Joseph from the slave market

screaming girls chasing the boys(!) – Potiphar's wife is scorned and has Joseph put in prison

very sad faces – Joseph in prison)

hopeful faces – will the butler remember him?

even sadder faces – the butler forgets

scared face – the Pharaoh's dreams);

being cows – Joseph's dream

amazed faces – Joseph is promoted to prime minister

remembering face – but is this the end?

2. Play a fruit salad game with the words **bags, bows, belly ache**. Get everyone into a circle and give them all one of these three words, suggesting actions to go with the words – for example, carrying bags on their backs, bowing down to an important person, holding their stomachs because they're starving. When you shout out one of these words at random, everyone given that word should cross the circle while performing the associated action. Try calling out pairs of words, speeding up each time. Finally, call all the words at once!

Telling the story

Tell the story using the two bags with the bags of money and the cup hidden in the bag full of seed.

- Jacob and his family are starving (*empty bag*).
- Ten of the brothers go to Egypt.
- Joseph recognises them but they don't recognise him.
- Joseph asks them about their family. He gives them the full bag of corn and holds back one brother asking that all the family come on their next visit to Egypt (*full bag*).
- When the brothers get home, they discover the money in the bag of corn – very strange! (*pull out money bags*).
- Jacob is sad because he doesn't want Benjamin to go to Egypt the next time they need corn.
- When the corn runs out again, Jacob eventually agrees to let all the brothers go but with a solemn promise to bring Benjamin back safely (*empty bag*).
- Joseph meets them all again, including his own closest brother. He invites them to a feast – but



he has to excuse himself because he is crying for joy.

- He gives them corn to take home and they set off. But soldiers come after them and when they search the corn they find a cup as well as the money (*full bag and the cup*).
- Benjamin has the bag, so he'll be the one punished. They all agree that they would rather take Benjamin's place and be put in prison instead.
- Joseph knows that they've changed.
- Joseph reveals who he is.
- 'God has been with me. What you did to me was bad but God has turned it to good. He sent me ahead of you to rescue you all from starving.'
- They bring Jacob to Egypt and the whole family are together again (*big cheer*).

Joseph has changed. The brothers have changed. What a story! These stories in God's book are written so that they might teach us more about God, about us and about God's love. We too can be changed and given help to forgive and start again by God, whose love never changes.