



## On your marks

The story of Joseph can be found in the final chapters of the Book of Genesis and takes up 13 chapters in total (37-50). The account of how this spoilt favourite son is sold into slavery, climbs the ladder of success in Egypt, despite years in prison and then becomes the leading official in the land, who then saves his own family from starvation and brings them to come and live with him, is an inspirational tale. It is an amazing example of God's long-term plan for his people. What seems to be a disaster is used for good in the end. Joseph's own testimony to his brothers at the end of his story is this:

*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. (Genesis 50: 20).*

This is a story of ups and downs; of very human jealousies and betrayals; of broken promises, success and perhaps most of all forgiveness.

To capture the sense of the successes and failures, disasters and blessings of the Joseph story, the following activity uses the idea of a game similar to snakes and ladders, which charts the fall and rise of Joseph.

## Get set

You will need to set out a grid on the floor that is six squares by six squares. Each square should be large enough to take an A4 piece of card with instructions as well as space for one, two or even three children to stand. You may like to use ready made noughts and crosses grids such as are available in packs from the Early Learning Centre. These are plastic sheets (3 x3) that have a snakes and ladders game on one side and a grid of squares on the other. If you put together four of these you will have a grid 6 by 6. Alternatively just use masking tape and create your own grid on the floor.

You will also need a large die - there is a blow-up die available in the ELC pack.

## Go!

### 1

You need to attach a set of instruction cards (see 4 below) to your plastic game area or fix them within the grid on the ground. Starting from the bottom left-hand corner the path through the grid travels left-to-right and then right to left and so on, zigzagging its way to finish in the top left-hand square. Distribute the instruction cards evenly among the squares but in the order given below, which follows the life of Joseph. Before you start the game just check that the spacing of the cards avoids making the children land again and again on the same instruction card, because they are being told to move back one or two etc.



## 2

Before you start the game, run through the downs and ups of Joseph's life by reading the different instruction cards with the children and filling in the details of what happened to Joseph.

## 3

Depending on the size of your group you should be able to have up to three or four children playing the game at a time. The others can watch and ensure fair play, while they await their turn! The winners of the different heats could then play each other. By then the facts and events in the life of Joseph should have been covered at least once.

## 4

Here are the instruction cards.

*This first one should go on the first square*

The Downs and Ups of Joseph  
Throw an even number to start

Jacob's favourite son  
Move forward 2

Joseph dreams he's top dog  
Move forward 2

Brothers hate him  
Move back 1

Jacob gives him a special coat  
Move forward 2

Joseph grasses on his brothers  
Move back 1

Brothers hate him even more  
Move back 1

Brothers throw him in a pit  
Move back 3

They sell Joseph to Ishmaelite traders  
Move back 1

Joseph works for Potiphar in Egypt  
Move forward 2

Mrs Potiphar lies about Joseph. He is slung into jail



Move back 1

Joseph interprets dreams for butler and baker

Move forward 1

They forget - two more years in jail

Miss a turn

Pharaoh has dreams and Joseph is sent for

Move forward 1

Joseph ends up Governor of Egypt

Move forward 2

Brothers come looking for grain. Can Joseph forgive?

Miss a turn

Joseph tests them. Have they changed? Yes!

Move forward 1

*Children must throw the correct number to cover the squares left in order to win*

*This final card should go on the last square*

Joseph invites them all to stay in Egypt

Hurray!

## 5

God uses this very human story to teach us many lessons. I wonder what the children think are the main lessons of this story?

The poet who wrote Psalm 105 sums up the Joseph story like this:

*When he summoned a famine on the land,  
And broke every staff of bread,  
He had sent a man ahead of them,  
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.  
His feet were hurt with fetters,  
His neck was put in a collar of iron;  
Until what he had said came to pass  
The word of the Lord tested him.  
The King sent and released him,  
The ruler of the people set him free;  
He made him Lord of his house,  
And ruler of all his possessions,  
To instruct his princes at his pleasure,*



*And to teach his elders wisdom.*  
(Psalm 105: 16-22)

Whenever the people of God heard this story, it was a particular comfort for them when they were facing a hard time, such as they did in the Exile, far from home. It reminded them that God had not forgot them and that he would use what was happening to bless them and to bless others in the end.