

# JOSEPH THE TRUSTED SERVANT

## Joseph's Family (Part 4)

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### **PURPOSE OF LESSON:**

*To encourage the children to follow Joseph's example by working well at whatever they do.*

### **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

*Genesis 37:36, 39:1-6  
Colossians 3:22-24*

### **VISUAL AIDS:**

*Use Picture Cards JO-25-32 and wordstrips 5-7.*

### **CARD JO-25:**

Last week we left Joseph when his brothers had sold him as a slave. Imagine how Joseph felt as he was walking toward the land of Egypt, knowing he could not escape from the camel drivers who had bought him.

How do **you** think Joseph was feeling on the inside? (*Have suggestions, eg upset at not seeing his dad again, angry with his brothers, afraid of what was ahead, etc.*)

Of course, it would have been very easy for Joseph to complain. I am sure if I had been there I would have thought, "It is not fair! Why should I be taken off as a slave? God, why are you doing this to me?"

Did you know that some people today get angry with God when things go wrong for them? But of course, it is not His fault!

Although he could have been really angry with God, Joseph was not like that. He knew that God is in charge of everything and if God lets something happen, He lets it happen for a reason.

(*Point to Joseph*) As Joseph got further and further away from his home,

he really missed his father and I am sure he was very hurt and upset inside when he thought about it.

When he felt like that, I can imagine Joseph praying, "God, I give you all my hurt, upset feelings because I miss my father so much." And afterwards he would have felt a lot better.

As Joseph got closer to Egypt, he must have felt really angry towards his brothers for selling him. Perhaps he even thought, "If I ever get home, I will pay them back."

But Joseph knew it was no use holding mean, angry feelings in his heart. It would only make him miserable!

So I can imagine Joseph praying, "Lord, I give you all my angry feelings towards my brothers. And Lord, even though it was their fault, I do not want to carry these feelings with me."

If we hold hatred and anger in our heart, we are the ones who end up miserable. Joseph realised there was no point in staying angry with his brothers. That was not going to make him feel good.

Now that he had given these bad feelings to God, Joseph would have felt much better.

### **CARD JO-26:**

Finally Joseph arrived in Egypt. The slave trader would have got off his camel and lined him up with all the other slaves for sale in the slave market.

Joseph must have been afraid of who was going to buy him. Some masters were very cruel and worked their slaves very hard.

I can imagine Joseph praying, "Lord, I do not want to be a slave for the rest of my life, but if I have to, would you make sure the right person buys me?"

Then he saw a very important looking man walking into the slave market. He did not know this was one of the leaders of the army of Egypt.

His name was Potiphar and he was in charge of the King's special guard. Now he was looking for a strong, new slave.

Joseph, of course, was strong. He had developed his muscles because he was used to good hard work.

As Potiphar walked along, there was something about Joseph that caught his eye. I am sure Joseph was not standing there like a lot of the other slaves, looking angry and unhappy.

Joseph was different. He had a peaceful look on his face because he had let go the hurt and anger he felt. Perhaps Potiphar felt his muscles and saw he was strong. Anyway, he decided to buy him, and took him off to his house.

Joseph discovered that Potiphar, being such an important man, would have had one of the best houses in Egypt. I do not know what it would have looked like but maybe it had big beautiful halls, marble floors and so on.

#### **CARD JO-27:**

Joseph, being the newest slave, and being only 17 years old, would probably have been given the hardest and most boring jobs to start with. Maybe the first thing the slave-in-charge said was, "Here, clean the floor."

Where he had come from they had lived in tents so Joseph would have never cleaned a floor in his life! But he was one of those boys who had already learnt from home that when you did a job, you should do it properly. (*Put up **wordstrip 5***)

So he did. He started cleaning the floor and after a while perhaps he came to a bad stain. Would he ignore it? No, he rubbed and rubbed until the stain was gone, then he carried on cleaning.

#### **CARD JO-28:**

Maybe some of the other slaves said to him, "Hey, slow down. You do not have to work that hard!" They watched Joseph move the furniture out of the corners so he could get in behind and clean where the others had not bothered to clean.

Sometimes if we do a job really well other people will not like us for it because they feel guilty that they are not doing as well as they should. Lots of people try to get away with doing just as little as they possibly can.

Maybe the other slaves laughed at him and said, "You do not have to move everything! Just clean the part that everybody can see. Nobody will notice if you do the rest."

But that was not the way Joseph was used to working. And anyway, he knew that somebody **was** watching him work! God can see everything we do. (*Put up **wordstrip 6***)

And because Joseph worked well as though he was doing it for the Lord, the Lord was really pleased. In fact, the Bible says that God was so pleased that He began to bless Joseph.

And somebody else began to notice too. Potiphar discovered that whenever he asked Joseph to do a job, he did it really well. And he could always be trusted to finish a job.

#### **CARD JO-29:**

So he decided to promote Joseph, and he put him in charge of some of the other slaves. He probably gave Joseph a new uniform to wear to show that he was in charge.

Even though Joseph was the newest slave in the whole place, he was now put in charge of some of these other men because he worked so well.

Just a moment! That reminds me of another time the same thing had happened! When was that? (*At home with his brothers*)

Imagine how the other slaves felt about it. "It is not fair. He has only been here a short while. Now he is in charge of us. We have been serving here for years. He is just Potiphar's favourite!"

It was not that Joseph was Potiphar's favourite. It was just that he could be trusted. Sometimes at school we think, "It is not fair. That person is the teacher's favourite. They always get chosen to do the best things." No, it is only that the teacher can trust them.

*(Put up **wordstrip 7**)* One of the most helpful things to learn in life is to be a person who can be trusted.

### **CARD JO-30:**

Perhaps there were times they would have to go out and buy big sacks of grain to feed the household. Because Joseph was in charge he was able to tell the others what to do.

But he was not like some people who, when they are given responsibility, just sit back and fold their arms and say, "I am in charge now. I do not have to do anything. You do all the work."

A good leader is somebody who gets in and does the work with the people. Some children, when they are given responsibility, end up being bossy and giving all the orders.

Joseph was not afraid of hard work so he helped the other slaves pick up the heavy bags and carry them out. Of course, the others probably did not like Joseph because he worked so well.

All this time God was watching. *(Point to wordstrip 6)* He was seeing that everything Joseph did he was doing with his whole heart. And so the Bible says that God caused everything he did to go well.

Because they did not have refrigerators back then to keep food fresh, it was likely that each day Potiphar would send a slave to the city markets to buy fresh meat and vegetables.

### **CARD JO-31:**

While there, they were probably tempted by the delicious smells of food being cooked.

Now, slaves are not given a lot of food to eat, nor do they have money of their own. But they did have some of Potiphar's money in their pockets.

I can imagine them thinking; "Potiphar is so rich he will never notice if we spend just a little bit of his money on the way home." So perhaps they reached into their pocket, took some of the coins, bought the food, and swallowed it down quickly so no one would know.

Maybe Joseph was also asked to buy things in the market. Joseph would have also noticed those same delicious smells coming out of the market.

I guess he was tempted to use Potiphar's money to buy food for himself in the same way the other slaves were.

The difference with Joseph was that when he was tempted with those beautiful smells, God put the thought in his mind, "Joseph, that would be stealing." God speaks to us through our consciences to warn us when we are tempted to do wrong.

Maybe Joseph called out a quick prayer to God, "Please help me not to do it." Then he turned his back and hurried away from the tempting smells.

Sometimes when we are tempted to do something we know we should not, the best thing to do is to turn around and get away from it quickly.

Whether this is what really happened or not, we do not know. But we do know that somehow or other, Potiphar discovered that Joseph could be trusted with money.

Now, because Potiphar was captain of the King's guard, he was away from home quite a lot.

And in those days they did not have banks where you could keep money. It

had to be kept in a safe place in your own house, where nobody could get at it.

So when Potiphar was away, he needed somebody to look after his money. Who do you think he chose?

Yes, Potiphar said, "Joseph, I want to put you in charge, not only of my slaves but of all my money."

**CARD JO-32:**

So by getting Joseph to look after his money, Potiphar was giving him a big responsibility. I am sure he gave Joseph some special clothes to wear as a sign of the new position he held.

When Potiphar was away, he probably wondered, "Will my money be safe? Will Joseph look after everything properly?"

Maybe your mum wonders the same things. When she goes out can she trust you to keep away from her purse? Are you responsible enough to look after things properly?

When Potiphar came home he found that all his money was safe, and Joseph had organised everything well.

*(Point to wordstrip 7)* You see, because Joseph could be trusted to do the little jobs well, now he could be trusted to do the big jobs well.

Later on the Bible tells us that when Potiphar was away he did not even worry about what was going on back at home. He just relaxed, knowing that Joseph was handling things.

Potiphar did not have to check up on Joseph. He had no concern about anything. And God blessed Joseph, not because he was a super-saint.

He was just an ordinary person like you and me. What made him special was that he had learnt the secret of working well while he was young. *(Point to wordstrip 5)* One of the best things you can learn while you are young is how to work well and finish jobs and show you are responsible.

The Bible says that "The Lord was with Joseph and made him successful in whatever he did".

Perhaps you want to follow Joseph's example and work really well in whatever you are doing, whether it is at home or at school.

Let us all close our eyes and sit quietly, and those who want to can talk to God. Perhaps you want to pray, "Lord, please help me not to be lazy. Help me to work well and responsibly like Joseph did.

*(Give the children the usual opportunity to respond to God in a time of silent prayer.)*