

Joseph: Message to Pharaoh

Session 1

Genesis 41:1–43; 45:4–11



Something to Remember

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one and the same; God has revealed to Pharaoh what God is about to do.”
—Genesis 41:25

Main Idea

God gives Joseph the ability to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams, saving the Egyptians and the Israelites from famine.

Catechism Question

Question 14. What did God do to help us?

God chose the people of Israel to make a new beginning. They received God’s covenant and prepared the way for Jesus to come as our Savior.

—*Belonging to God: A First Catechism*

Background for Teachers

Suggested Reading: Genesis 29:1—30:24; 37:1–30; 39:1—45:28

Welcome to a new year of *We Believe* and our theme for the year, “God’s Messengers.” We will get to know biblical people who were chosen by God to be messengers. We will explore the content of their messages and the types of messages, such as dreams, letters, visions, and parables.

Many of our sessions will feature episodes taken from longer stories. If a particular story is unfamiliar, or one that you haven’t read in some time, you may benefit from reading the longer text early in the week. Look for these Scripture references listed as *Suggested Reading* in each session.

In the Hebrew language, the word *malak* means “messenger,” especially in reference to an ambassador’s service to a king or other leader. The messenger conveys communiqués from one king to another; the messenger is in many ways considered the voice of the king. The prophets of the Old Testament are characterized as messengers of God, pronouncing the judgment of God and proclaiming the promise of God’s mercy. The English word *angel* is also used to translate *malak* (see Genesis 19:1), signifying that God’s angels serve as messengers for God. God desires to communicate with human beings, to establish and maintain a covenantal

relationship. As with any relationship, communication is crucial!

The church school year begins with an episode from Joseph’s story—his interpretation of Pharaoh’s dreams. Earlier, Joseph’s brothers had referred to him as “dreamer” (37:19). They conspired against him because the content of his dreams made them angry. Sold into slavery in Egypt (39:1), Joseph was nevertheless blessed by God. After being falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, he was cast into prison. He interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh’s cupbearer while in prison, and later, Joseph was called before Pharaoh to interpret Pharaoh’s disturbing dreams. Once again, God blessed him, and Joseph became the second in command in Egypt.

Joseph’s dreams (37:5–11), his interpretation of the dreams of Pharaoh’s chief cupbearer and chief baker (40:5–19), and his reading of Pharaoh’s dreams (41:1–7) demonstrate the qualities Joseph brings to his role as God’s messenger. As a young man, Joseph was a favored son. After Joseph lost his homeland, his family, his job—everything but his love for God—he embraced the role of dream interpretation with humility and courage. Because of his humility, he was open to seeing the new reality that God presented in Pharaoh’s dreams. Joseph speaks with courage the truth of the dreams, even at the risk of his life and freedom. As a result, Joseph is appointed to administer a famine-relief program for Egypt, and Joseph’s family seeks relief from him. As Genesis ends and Exodus begins, Israel resides in Egypt; the stage is set for God’s mighty act of liberation.

Joseph explains
dreams!





Assemble

Welcome

- "Attendance Chart" (M01, p. 123)
- Pen or marker
- Offering basket or envelope (*optional*)

♥ Name Map

(*self, word, picture*)

- Markers or crayons
- Pens or pencils
- 8 1/2" x 11" white paper

♥ Choose from one of the following activities:

Thirty Seconds

(*people, word*)

No materials needed

I Am and I Can

(*people, word*)

No materials needed



Claim

♥ Name Map, Part 2

(*people*)

- Completed Name Maps from Assemble

♥ Our Dreams

(*picture, word, self*)

- Prepared "wall"
- Crayons or markers
- Reflective music (*optional*)
- Music player (*optional*)

Bible Study

♥ Meet the Messenger

(*word, people*)

- Bible
- "Joseph: His Life and Adventures" (Color Pak Poster 2)

♥ Pharaoh's Dreams

(*word*)

- Bible
- "Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams" (Color Pak Poster 1)
- Prepared "Cows" (R1a, p. 16)
- Prepared "Corn" (R1b, p. 17)
- Removable tape

Joseph's Name Map

(*word*)

- One large sheet of paper or newsprint with JOSEPH written down the middle-left side of the paper
- Marker

Depart

♥ Remembering

(*word, people*)

- "God's Messengers" (Color Pak Poster 3)
- "Catechism Question 14" (Color Pak 1)

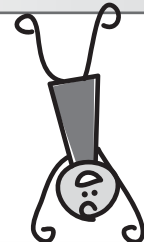
♥ You Are God's Messenger!

(*people, body*)

No materials needed

Send Home

- Name Map
- Copy of For the Home 1 (Director CD), or e-mail it home



The **Heart of the Lesson**: The heart symbol shows you those parts of the session that carry you through the "heart of the lesson." Choose other activities as you prefer.



M.i. We Believe sessions are developed with the theory of **Multiple Intelligences** in mind. Activities in the lesson planning boxes above are labeled with the types of intelligences that they emphasize. See pages 8 and 9 to learn more about the theory of Multiple Intelligences.



C.P. The **Color Pak** is sold separately from the Teacher's Book and includes color resources and color posters. The Color Pak items are integral to the sessions. Go to your Color Pak to find the Color Pak resources and posters listed above.



The **Director CD**: Find Resource Pages, MP3 Files, Song Lyrics, For the Home, Teacher Helps, and Evaluation Form on the Director CD.

Welcome

In many congregations, this is the first session of a new church school year. Today's opening activities focus on you and your students. Who are the children in your class? What are their names, interests, and abilities? How will you learn together as a multiage class?

As the children and their parents or caregivers arrive, tell them about any sign-in and offering procedures you have. Record their attendance on "Attendance Chart."



Teaching Tip

Troublesome letters: Suggest that Quinn and Zelda consider words that contain the Q or Z, crossword-puzzle-style. For example, the "Z" in Zelda might be part of the word "puZzles," an activity she likes to do. Quinn might like to play the game "croQuet." Still stuck? Leave the really tricky ones blank.

Assemble: God Calls Us Together

Name Map (self, word, picture)

Invite the children to create Name Maps. Give them sheets of 8 1/2" x 11" white paper and tell them to write their names in large letters down the middle-left side. Ask the children to illustrate, with words or pictures, adjectives that describe them or activities that they enjoy that begin with each of the letters in their names. Make your own Name Map as well. As they work, engage the children in conversation about their creations. Set the Name Maps aside for use in Claim.

Choose one of the following getting-to-know-you activities:

Thirty Seconds (people, word)

Have the children pair up. Suggest that they choose someone they do not know well. Tell them that they each have thirty seconds to introduce themselves to their partners. Have them begin with their names and include other details, such as the schools they attend, or their favorite colors, places, or hobbies. Have each pair choose who will go first, then begin. After thirty seconds, call "switch," and remind the children to change who is talking. Call time at the end of the thirty seconds.

Gather the children in a circle. Invite each pair to introduce each partner to the group by sharing their partner's name and one or two interesting things about their friend.

I Am and I Can (people, word)

Gather the children in a circle. Ask them to think of one activity that they enjoy. They can choose something from their Name Maps. Instruct the children to imagine how they would briefly, in one or two motions, act out that activity. For example, Jonathan is good at juggling. He says, "I am Jonathan and I can juggle," and he mimics juggling. The group says "Hi, Jonathan" and repeats the motion. Continue around the circle until all of the children have introduced themselves.

Bible Study: We Hear God's Word

Meet the Messenger (word, people)

Joseph was one of God's messengers. The name Joseph may be familiar to the children. Clear up any confusion they might have about this Joseph and the Joseph of the New Testament who was Mary's husband and Jesus' earthly father. Show the children "Joseph: His Life and Adventures" (Color Pak Poster 2) and tell them that this Joseph was one of twelve brothers. He had a special coat and his brothers sold him into slavery. Point to and describe the pictures as you like. Today's lesson is about picture 6.

Summarize the events of Genesis 41:1–13. Make the point that Pharaoh had two strange dreams that no one in his court could understand. Explain that Joseph was known to be able to interpret dreams and he was brought to court to help Pharaoh understand what Pharaoh’s dreams meant.

Open your Bible to Genesis 41 and show the children where the story is found. Invite the children to pray with you. Pray the following prayer of illumination, or one like it, as you prepare to read and study God’s word.

Prayer for Illumination

Almighty God, we thank you for sending messengers who help us to understand you better. Help us to hear and understand your message for us as we learn more about Joseph. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.



Pharaoh’s Dreams

(word)

Show the children “Joseph Interprets Pharaoh’s Dreams” (Color Pak Poster 1) as you tell the story of Joseph in Genesis 41:14–36.

Tell the story this way:

- ✎ Read verses 14–18. Ask the children to help you count the seven fat and sleek cows on the poster.
- ✎ Read verse 19. Hold up the seven thin and ugly cows cut from “Cows.”
- ✎ Read verses 20–21. Ask one of the children to tape the thin and ugly cows from the resource over the fat and sleek cows on the poster.
- ✎ Read verse 22. Ask the children to help you count the seven full and good ears of corn on the poster.
- ✎ Read verse 23. Hold up the seven withered and thin ears of corn you cut from “Corn.”
- ✎ Read verse 23. Ask one of the children to tape the withered and thin ears of corn from the resource over the full and good ears of corn on the poster.
- ✎ Read verses 25–36.



Teaching Tip

To help your posters last longer, use removable tape when you attach them to surfaces, or laminate them.



Learning Together

Engage the children in the story. Strong readers can read the verses listed here. One child can hold the poster while another attaches the pictures as described and under your direction. Younger children can help you count the corn and the cows.

Engage the children in conversation about the story by using some or all of the following questions:

- ❓ How were Pharaoh’s two dreams alike? (*Both dreams concerned the number seven. Both dreams had weak things that ate strong things.*)
- ❓ How do you think Pharaoh’s advisers felt when they did not know what Pharaoh’s dream meant?
- ❓ How do you think Joseph felt when he did know what Pharaoh’s dreams meant?
- ❓ What did Joseph say that the dreams meant? (*There would be seven years of lots and lots of food followed by seven years when there wouldn’t be enough food to go around.*)

Genesis 41:1–43; 45:4–11

- ? How did Joseph know what these dreams meant? (*God gave Joseph the skills to interpret Pharaoh's dreams [see verses 16, 25, and 28]*).
- ? How do you think Pharaoh felt after Joseph had interpreted his dreams? (*The Bible doesn't tell us Pharaoh's reaction, but we do know that Pharaoh accepted Joseph's interpretation and appointed Joseph to oversee the land. Emphasize that Pharaoh was the ruler of Egypt, yet here it is clear that it was not Pharaoh, but God who was in charge.*)

Joseph's Name Map

(word)

Invite the children to help you create a Name Map for Joseph like the ones they made for themselves during Assemble. Write Joseph's name in large letters down the middle-left side of a large sheet of paper or newsprint. Invite the children to contribute one (or more!) words or phrases that describe Joseph's role as messenger for each letter in his name. Use words that describe who Joseph was, what he did in the story, and the special abilities that he had.

Claim: We Respond to God's Word

Name Map, Part 2

(people)

Give the children their Name Maps from Assemble. Invite them to share their names and one or two of the items from their Name Maps. Just as Joseph attributed all of his gifts to God, have the children introduce the items on their maps by saying, "I thank God that (*child names items; for example, I am able to play baseball well; I am caring; I like to paint*)."

Encourage the class to respond, "Thanks be to God!" for each of the gifts that the children name.

Our Dreams

(picture, word, self)

Before the session, use large sheets of paper to create a blank "wall" in your meeting space. Remind the children that Pharaoh's dreams were signs of what God was going to do in Egypt. Joseph's explanation of these dreams was a reminder that God is in charge of everything, and is the source of all things.

Invite the children into a time of reflection about their dreams for the future. Have them imagine things for which they are thankful and things that they dream and hope that God will do with their lives. Perhaps they hope for a special gift or ability, such as the courage to speak up in class or to be a more caring friend. Have the children think about their dreams for their families, their community, and the world.

In this story, the mention of famine reminds us of people who are hungry today. What dreams do the children have for God to help people who are hungry, lonely, or poor? How can they be God's messengers in these situations?



Teaching Tip

No open wall space? Use large cardboard appliance boxes to create columns that have four blank sides. Place something heavy inside the boxes so that they stay still while children work with them.

Small space? Use a piece of poster board for your Wall of Dreams.

After time for reflection, invite the children to put their dreams on the blank wall. They can illustrate their dreams with pictures or write words that describe their dreams. Tell the children that these dreams are a prayer. Play quiet reflective music as the children offer their dreams to God in pictures and words.

Gather the children around their Wall of Dreams. Invite them to pray with you. Say a prayer of thanks to God for these dreams. Ask God to help you and the children interpret these dreams for others. Allow space and time for the children to offer their own prayers silently or out loud.

Depart: God Sends Us into the World

Remembering (word, people)

Draw the children's attention to "God's Messengers" (Color Pak Poster 3). Point out the picture of Joseph. Ask them to name one thing they will remember about Joseph. Encourage them to look for different kinds of messages and messengers in the coming week.

Tell the children that one of the ways we remember God's messages is through statements of faith, such as a catechism. A catechism is a series of questions and answers about faith and belief, and it is part of our message that we share with one another as Christians. Have a volunteer read the question on "Catechism Question 14" (Color Pak 1), and invite all of the children to read or repeat the answer together.

You Are God's Messenger! (people, body)

Move into a circle and have everyone in the circle hold hands. Look to the child who is on your right and say, "(Child's name), you are God's messenger!" Have the child respond with, "Thanks be to God!" The child on your right exchanges the same phrases with the child who is on his or her right. Continue around the circle until all of the children have exchanged the sending message. Conclude by saying to the class, "We are all God's messengers!" and cue them to respond, "Thanks be to God!"

Evaluate

How did things go today? Get to know your class so that you will be able to choose lesson options that best suit or challenge them. Take a few moments to offer your own prayer for each of the children who came today, and for the messages and dreams that they shared.

Future

In Session 3 you and the children will make a 3-D map of Canaan in the time of Deborah and you will need an Art Box. An Art Box is a box full of art stuff that you collect to have on hand for the children to use to create art (you'll use it again and again this quarter). Read the description in the sidebar on page 30.



Learning Together

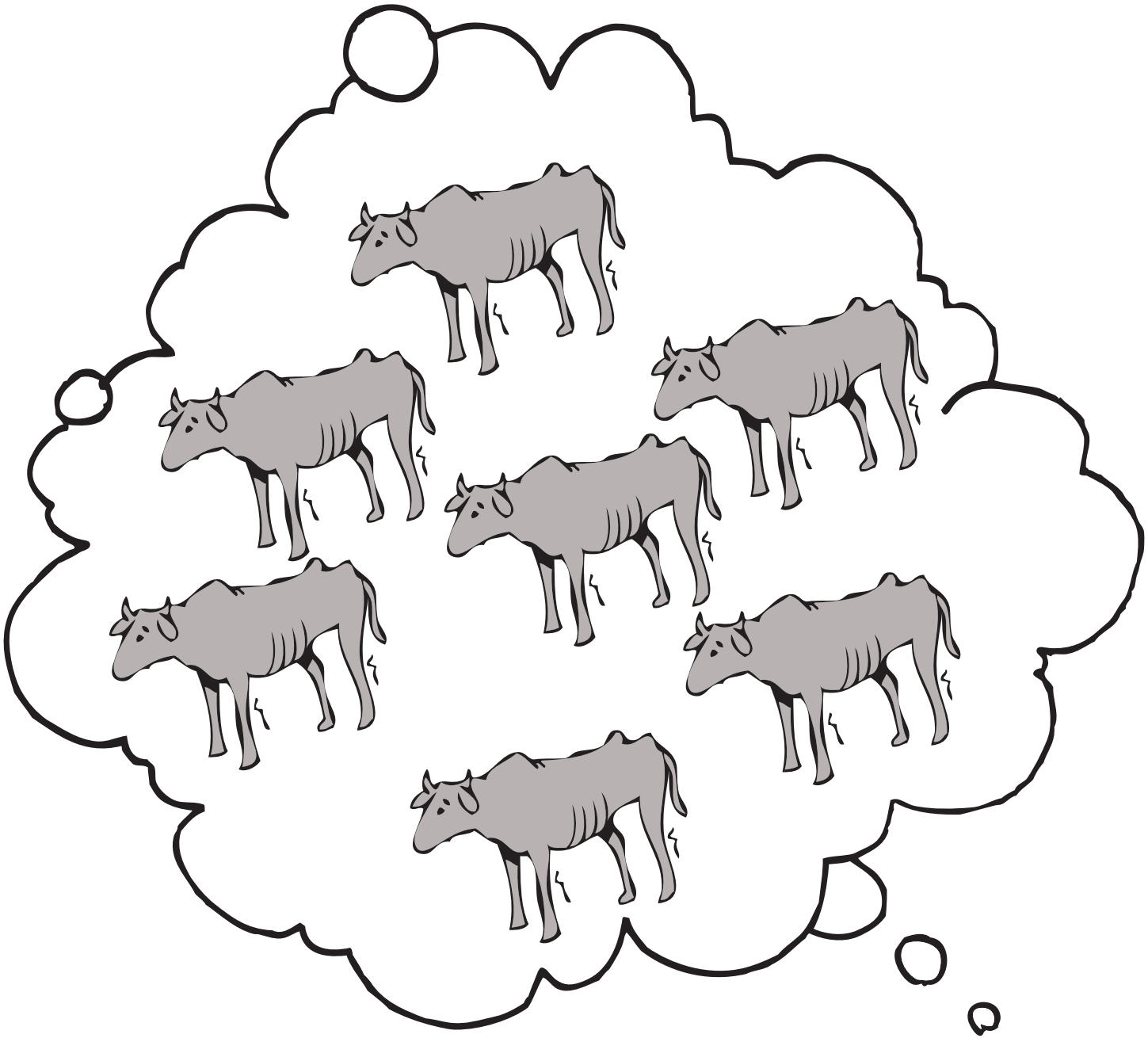
Work with your class to clean up your meeting space. Give each child an age-appropriate job. Young children can sort crayons and stack pillows. Older children can squirt cleanser on the table and wipe it. What jobs do you need to be done? Everyone can contribute!



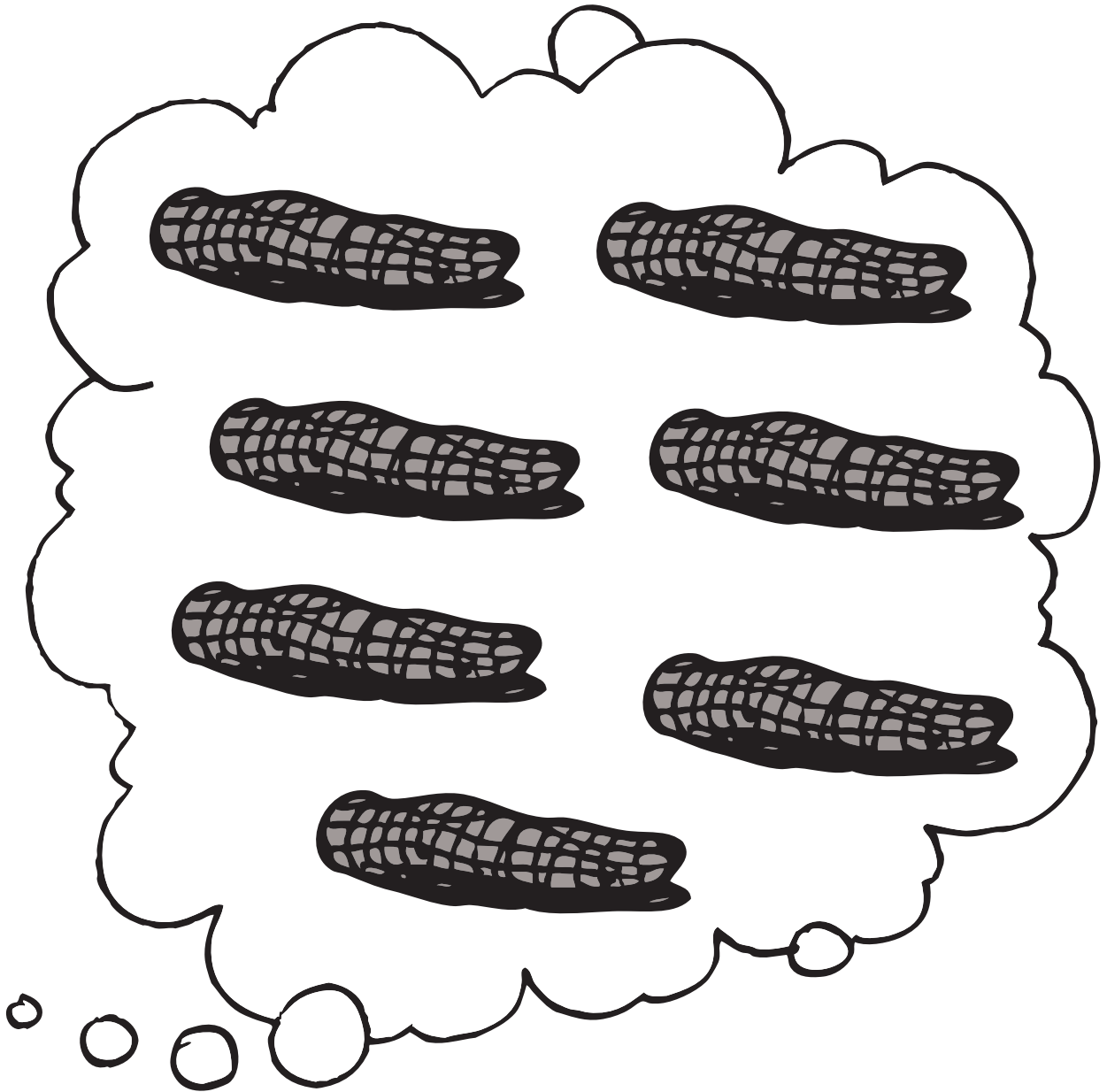
Send Home

- Name Map
- Copy of For the Home 1 (Director CD), if not e-mailed home

Note to Teacher: Photocopy one copy of this resource and cut out the group of seven cows.



Note to Teacher: Photocopy one copy of this resource and cut out the group of seven ears of corn.



Attendance Chart
Sessions 1–7, Multiage



Moses Aaron



Deborah



Name	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6	Session 7
Joseph							
Elijah							
Isaiah							
Amos							



© 2010 Congregational Ministries Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation.
Permission to reproduce this page granted to purchasers of this material.