

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. 124) *(optional)*
- Offering basket or envelope *(optional)*

♥ Name Pictures

(self, word, picture)

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

I Am and I Can

(people, word)

No materials needed



Claim

Joseph's Name Picture

(word, people)

- Sheet of newspaper
- Marker

♥ Our Dreams

(picture, word, self)

- Several large sheets of paper or several large cardboard appliance boxes (See p. 14 for special preparation.)
- Crayons or markers
- Reflective music and music player

Bible Study

Who Are God's Messengers?

(word, people)

No materials needed

♥ Who Is Joseph?

(word, picture)

- "Joseph's Life" (Color Pak Poster 1)

♥ Strange Dreams

(word)

- Bibles
- Children's story Bible *(optional)* (see p. 13 for special preparation)
- "Joseph's Life" (Color Pak Poster 1)

Depart

♥ Remembering Through Catechism

(word)

- "God's Messengers" (Color Pak Poster 3)

A Message to Remember

(word)

- Bibles
- Blank index card for each child
- Pens or pencils
- Markers and/or crayons *(optional)*

♥ You Are God's Messenger!

(people)

- Name Pictures from Assemble

Send Home

- Name Picture
- Message to Remember card
- 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.



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

Welcome children and parents or caregivers as they arrive and orient them to any sign-in, attendance, and offering procedures you may have. If you use an attendance chart, fill in the names on “Attendance Chart.”



Teaching Tip

Do you have new children in your class who may not know everyone? Since the children will not be sharing their Name Pictures until Depart, make introductions while the children are working on their pictures or structure your time to include the I Am and I Can activity.



Teaching Tip

Having trouble with using an uncommon letter in a child’s name? Consider a word that contains that letter, and shift the beginning of the word to the left of the vertical name column, crossword-puzzle style. For example, the “Z” in Elizabeth might be part of the word *puzzles* as an activity Elizabeth likes to do. Still stuck? Move on to another letter, leaving some letters blank, if need be. If a child has a particularly long name, tell them they may use a shortened version of their name or a nickname.

I Am and I Can: Challenging Activities

- Make a chain of names and motions, having the children repeat the names and motions of the children who have gone before them.
- Have the children think of an ability or interest that begins with the same letter as their first names.

Assemble: God Calls Us Together

♥ Name Pictures (self, word, picture)

Invite the children to create Name Pictures. Have them write their first name in large letters vertically down the left side of a piece of paper. Have each child illustrate with words or pictures an adjective that describes them or an activity they enjoy or are good at that begins with each of the letters in their first name. Make a Name Picture for yourself as well. As the children work on their pictures, engage them in conversations about their summer, the upcoming school year, or their interests. When the children are finished with their Name Pictures, set the pictures aside for Depart.

I Am and I Can (self, word, picture)

Gather the children in a circle and play a getting-to-know-you activity. Have each child think of one activity he or she is good at or simply enjoys. Instruct the children to imagine how they would briefly, in one or two motions, act out that special ability or interest. Ask for a volunteer to say his or her name and to perform the corresponding motion. For example, Peter might be good at juggling, and he could say, “I am Peter, and I can (*pretend to juggle*).” Instruct the group to respond, “Hi, (*child’s name*). We’re glad you can (*name the activity and repeat the motion*).” Continue around the circle until all children have had the opportunity to share. See suggestions in the sidebar to make the activity more challenging.

Bible Study: We Hear God’s Word

Who Are God’s Messengers? (word, people)

Engage the children in a discussion about messengers. Ask the children to name some different kinds of messages and the messengers who deliver them. Next, ask the children what messengers they can name from the Bible. They may identify angels, prophets, Jesus Christ, Moses, or others. Encourage the children to identify how these biblical figures were God’s messengers. Tell the children that this year they will be learning about many of God’s messengers, some who are more familiar than others. Name Joseph if he was not already named by the children.

♥ Who Is Joseph? (word, picture)

Explain that today’s story comes from roughly halfway through the story of Joseph, when he was called to interpret two strange dreams for the pharaoh. Set the context of Joseph’s story at this point in his life. Clear up any confusion they have about this Joseph of the Old Testament and the Joseph of the New Testament who was Mary’s husband and Jesus’ earthly father. Draw the children’s attention to “Joseph’s Life” (Color Pak Poster 1) and invite volunteers to read the captions for pictures 1–5. Today’s story is about pictures 6 and 7.

 **Strange Dreams**
(word)

Pray the following prayer, or one like it, with the children:

Prayer for Illumination
Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of messengers. As we read about your messenger Joseph today, send your Spirit to help us hear your message to us today. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Invite the children to open their Bibles to Genesis 41. This week's passage is lengthy. You may wish to read the passage from Genesis 41 from a story Bible; see the sidebar for suggestions. After reading the story, use the questions below to engage the children in conversation.

If you choose to have the children read from their Bibles, break the passages up into the three segments listed below. Have children who are interested in reading take turns reading the verses in each segment. Ask the children the questions after each segment. Some verse references and points to emphasize are included as well. Note that before the last segment, you will need to fill in a bit of the story.

 **Special Preparation
For Children's Story
Bible Suggestions**

- "Joseph Helps the Pharaoh" from *The Family Story Bible* by Ralph Milton (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996)
- "Pharaoh's Dreams" from *The Children's Illustrated Bible* by Selina Hastings (New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 1996, 2005)
- "38: The Prisoner and the King" and "39: The New Prime Minister" from *The Children's Bible in 365 Stories* by Mary Batchelor (Oxford, England: Lion Publishing, 1985, 1995, 2001)

Read Genesis 41:1–16.

- ? What did the pharaoh do when no one in his court could interpret his dreams? (*See verses 8 and 14–15.*)
- ? What do you think the pharaoh's dreams meant?
- ? What is Joseph's role in this story? How do you think he might have felt going before the pharaoh?

Read Genesis 41:25–43.

- ? How do you think Pharaoh felt after Joseph had interpreted his dreams? (*The Bible doesn't tell us a specific reaction, but we do know from later verses that Pharaoh accepts the interpretation and appoints Joseph to oversee the land. Emphasize that Pharaoh is the ruler of Egypt, yet here it is clear that it is not Pharaoh, but God who is in charge.*)
- ? What does the pharaoh do in response to Joseph's message? (*See verses 37–43. He appoints Joseph to oversee the land during the time of plenty and of famine.*)
- ? Where do you see God in this story? (*See verses 16, 25, 28, and 32 for some help. Emphasize that Joseph gives all the credit to God and that it is God's message that Joseph is relaying to Pharaoh.*)

Explain that through the next few chapters, what Joseph had spoken of came to pass; there was a time of plenty and a time of famine. Draw the children's attention to pictures 8 and 9 on "Joseph's Life" (Color Pak Poster 1) and have volunteers read the captions.

Read Genesis 45:4–11.

- ? How is Joseph God's messenger in this situation now? (*Pay particular attention to verse 5.*)

Joseph: Message to Pharaoh

Genesis 41:1–43; 45:4–11



Teaching Tip

Stumped by a letter? Use the ideas below to get the children's creative juices flowing, or simply skip that letter and come back to it later.

- J:** **jumps** into action to share his gifts
- j**oins magicians and wise men to help the pharaoh
- O:** **overcomes** being sold into slavery
- o**versees the collection of food
- S:** **servant/slave** of the captain of the guard
- s**hares God's message
- E:** **explains** what the pharaoh's dreams mean
- e**xcellent listener
- P:** **predicts** the future
- p**erceptive
- H:** **humble**—gives all credit to God!
- h**elper/helps the pharaoh with a plan



Special Preparation for Blank Wall

Create a blank "wall" in the room using several large sheets of newsprint or craft paper secured to an area of the wall or a bulletin board.

Don't have open wall space? Use several large cardboard appliance boxes to create columns with four blank sides. Place something heavy inside the boxes so they will remain still while children are working with them.



Teaching Tip

You may want to use the Something to Remember Bible verses and catechism questions as memory tools. Have the children memorize them throughout the quarter, offering incentives and rewards along the way. You may design this activity as you please.

Claim: We Respond to God's Word

Joseph's Name Picture

(word, people)

Invite the children to create a Name Picture for Joseph together as a class, similar to the ones they created for themselves during Assemble. Write Joseph's name vertically down the left side of a sheet of newsprint. Invite the children to contribute one or more words or phrases for each letter in Joseph's name that describe his role as messenger. The children may use words that describe who Joseph was, what he did in the story, or the special abilities that he had.



Our Dreams

(picture, word, self)

Remind the children that the pharaoh's dreams were signs of what God was going to do in Egypt. Joseph's explanation of these dreams is 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 the children imagine some of the things in their own lives that they are thankful to God for, or that they would dream that God would do. Have the children think about their dreams for their family, their community, and the world, and about how they might be God's messengers.

After a few moments of reflection, invite the children to illustrate with pictures or words some of their dreams on the blank wall you have prepared (see sidebar). Play reflective music softly as the children work. After they have had time to illustrate their dreams, gather the children around the wall of dreams. Invite them to share, as they feel comfortable, what some of their dreams are.

Depart: God Sends Us into the World



Remembering Through Catechism

(word)

Tell the children that one way to 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. Direct the children's attention to "God's Messengers" (Color Pak Poster 3) and have a volunteer read question 14. Invite all of the children to read the answer in unison. Ask them how they think Joseph played a role in God's new beginning for the people of Israel.

A Message to Remember

(word)

Give each child a blank index card. Working alone or in pairs, have the children find Genesis 41:25 in a Bible and write the words of the verse on the card. If there is time, they may decorate the card to use as a bookmark for their Bible.

You Are God’s Messenger!
(people)

Gather the children in a circle with their Name Pictures from Assemble. Just as Joseph attributed all his gifts to God, have the children say their names and one or two of the items from their Name Pictures 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*).” After each child speaks, have the class respond, “Thanks be to God!” After the children have finished sharing, have them cross their right arm over their left and hold a hand of the person on each side of them. Say to them, “In all that you are and all that you do, you are God’s messengers!” Instruct the children to all remain holding hands, raise their right arm, and turn to their right under their arm (they will need to pivot their hands as they turn). All the children should now be facing out. Invite them to respond, “Thanks be to God!”

Evaluate

As you prepare to leave the class, 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

For Session 2:

Gather supplies, such as cardboard tubes, building blocks, plastic containers, and wooden or plastic shapes; gather them in pairs so you can have two identical sets. They will be used to construct a structure. In lieu of building supplies, you can use play dough.

	<p>Notes:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Send Home

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