JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

I CAN ALWAYS TRUST GOD TO BE WITH ME.



MEMORY VERSE

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

WORD OF THE WEEK—TRUSTWORTHY:

Reliable and honest; able to be trusted. Whom do you know that is trustworthy?

This week's lesson is based on Genesis 37:12-25; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 210-214; *The Story of Redemption,* p. 101; *The Spirit of Prophecy,* vol. 1, pp. 130, 131; and *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 1, pp. 429-432, 1096. **Extra Reading:** *The Bible Story*, vol. 2, pp. 43-50.

SUNDAY

Hidden Hatred

Joseph's brothers had been gone a long time. They had taken the sheep out of their valley home, far away to the grassy fields of Shechem. It must have been quiet at home for Joseph and Benjamin as they helped around the camp and looked after the animals left behind.

More time passed, and still the brothers didn't return. Father Jacob was getting worried. Were they well? Were they safe? Something must be done! Jacob called for Joseph and told him what was bothering him.

"Here I am," replied Joseph (Genesis 37:13), eager to help his beloved father. Then Jacob said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me" (Genesis 37:14).

Jacob trusted Joseph to find his brothers and return with news from them. If he had known the hatred in his sons' hearts, he would not have sent Joseph alone. He would have known his older sons were like slithering snakes who couldn't be trusted. They had hidden their hatred well.

Joseph looked everywhere in Shechem, but his brothers weren't to be found. What would he tell his worried father who had trusted him to find them? He kept looking until someone came to help. What news did he bring? *Read Genesis 37:15-17.*

After finally spotting the shepherds' camp 75 miles away near Dothan, Joseph hurried excitedly to meet his brothers. He had found them: they were alive and well! Despite his brothers' unkindness to Joseph, he still loved and trusted them.

But the bitter brothers were not happy to see Joseph running toward them in his colorful coat. The sight of him stirred up their hatred. What could such hatred do?

Jacob and Joseph lived by God's words: "Most importantly, love each other deeply" (1 Peter 4:8, ICB). How sad that the older brothers didn't choose to live by those words. God could have helped them to enjoy loving and trusting family relationships, free from hatred. With God's help we can choose to live by God's words and enjoy loving, trusting relationships within our families too.

Mission Challenge:

Use your craft from Sabbath School yesterday to share the story you learned with a friend.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Why do you think Joseph was a loving and trustworthy son?*
- *What important jobs have your parents asked you to do? How well can you be trusted to do them?*

Pray: Hold hands with someone you trust and love. Thank God for the special bond you share.

MONDAY

A Wicked Plan

As he approached his brothers, Joseph didn't know he'd been spotted or that an evil plan had been plotted. He didn't hear the angry words that sliced through the air. "Here comes that dreamer. Let's kill him. . . . Then we will see what will become of his dreams!" (Genesis 37:19, 20 ICB).

Such murderous words made big brother Reuben feel uneasy. As the eldest son he was responsible for Joseph, and he didn't want him to die. But neither did he want to go totally against his brothers. So he came up with a halfway kind of plan. What was his idea? *Read Genesis 37:21, 22.*

Of course Reuben didn't tell his brothers that he planned to secretly rescue Joseph later and return him to his father.

After persuading his brothers to accept the idea, Reuben quietly slipped away. He was worried he might not be able to control how he felt. He didn't want those rough brothers to see his true feelings for Joseph; feelings that made him want to protect and care for him.

We want to be trustworthy, but we find it hard to go against the crowd. God can help us to be brave, just as He helped Reuben.



Our loving God has a beautiful promise we can claim when we feel trapped by others who want us to do wrong. "Yes, God is working in you to help you want to do what pleases him. Then he gives you the power to do it" (Philippians 2:13, ICB).

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *What was good about Reuben's plan? What was not so good?*
- *How easy is it for you to do what you know to be right when those around you aren't?*

PRAY: Thank God for the beautiful promises in His Word that remind you He is always there to help you be trustworthy and do the right thing.

DO: Think of some real-life situations in which you could feel pressured into not being trustworthy or not doing the right thing. Read **Philippians 2:13** after discussing each situation.



TUESDAY

Down in a Deep, Dark Pit

Joseph trotted happily toward his brothers. But his smile quickly faded when he noticed their angry glares. What was happening? These were the brothers he loved and trusted!

They teased him and made deadly threats. Then they grabbed him roughly, tore his coat, and stripped it from him. Confused and terrified, Joseph begged them to stop and tried to resist. But it was no use. Strong arms gripped him and hurled him into the depths of a deep, dark pit. Then those hard-hearted brothers wandered off and sat down to eat. Joseph's terrified calls likely reached their ears, but they ignored him.

Poor Joseph! How heartbreaking to learn that the brothers he loved didn't care for him at all. They couldn't be trusted. Alone, hungry, and frightened, Joseph sat huddled in the bottom of the deep hole he couldn't get himself out of. His trust in his brothers was broken, but he could still trust His faithful God. Joseph's brothers didn't listen when he called, but God always would. *Read Psalm 145:18.*

Sometimes people may misunderstand us or be mean to us for no good reason. It can make us feel sad, lonely, and upset to be rejected by those we trust. It may feel like we are in a dark pit, just as Joseph was. Our trustworthy God understands how we feel. He will always be with us when people prove untrustworthy and when frightening things happen to us. His Word says, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock" (Psalm 40:1, 2). We may struggle to understand some things that happen, but we can always call on God and trust Him to be with us and help us.

DO: Read **Psalm 40:1, 2** several times. Write, sketch, or draw symbols to record what speaks to your heart in these verses.

PRAY: Thank God for being a trustworthy friend who is always with you.

THINK . . . THEN TALK ABOUT IT:

- *Do you think Joseph had ever told Jacob when his brothers were mean to him? What makes you think that?*

WEDNESDAY

Sold to Ishmaelite Traders

No mom, no dad, no brothers—no one but God was with Joseph down in the depths of that lonely pit. But God was enough. What might Joseph have asked God while down in the pit? **Read Psalm 38:22.**

God had already used Reuben to stop his murderous brothers from killing Joseph. And God was about to work again, in an unexpected way. "Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt" (Genesis 37:25). Judah had an idea! What was it? **Read Genesis 37:26, 27.**

Like Judah, some of the brother's didn't feel good about what they had done to Joseph, so this new plan to sell him to traders was quickly agreed upon. It meant they wouldn't be guilty of his death, they would make some money, and they would never have to worry about Joseph being around to rule over them, as those annoying dreams had suggested he would. What a fail-proof plan! Or so they thought.

The brothers quickly hauled Joseph from the pit and sold him to the traders. Joseph pleaded and begged not to be sold, but they ignored the terror in his eyes and the fear in his voice. They felt proud of themselves for getting rid of their annoying brother in such a clever way.

Joseph was stunned by the cruelty of his brothers. He didn't know what his future as a slave would look like, but for now he was alive. He could learn to trust God in this difficult situation, for God can always be trusted. That was all that mattered.

Even when bad things happen, our wonderful God has not forgotten us. He is working for us in ways we may not see or understand. We can trust Him.

FAST FACT: A person can survive for an average of only three days without water.

PARENT FAITH TALK: Share a time you felt all alone and needed to trust God completely.

PRAY: Pray for opportunities to encourage others to trust God in hard times.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *In what ways were Joseph's brothers like Cain?*
- *How has God worked for Joseph's good in the story so far?*



THURSDAY

The Ripped Coat

When Reuben returned to the pit and found Joseph gone, he was frantic and tore his clothes. Panicked, he questioned his brothers, saying, "The boy is not there! What will I do?" (Genesis 37:30, ICB). As the eldest, Reuben was supposed to be responsible to look after his younger shepherd brothers. He had failed. How would he face his father, and what would he tell him?

It was impossible to get Joseph back, so Reuben felt he had no choice but to join with his brothers in a cruel plan to hide their guilt. They had been the opposite of trustworthy but they still wanted to make their father think they would tell the truth. What did they do? *Read Genesis 37:31-33.*

One sin often leads to another and another, and then lots of pain. The brothers' anger and jealousy had ended in lies and hurt for everyone. Jacob's pain was raw and deep. He tore his clothes and wept for many days, mourning the death of his much-loved son, Joseph. Hard as they tried, no one could comfort him.

The 10 brothers felt guilty for what they had done, as we always do when we betray the trust others have in us. They were also afraid of their father's anger, so they kept the crime hidden deep within their hearts. They felt certain that Father Jacob would never know what had happened to his favorite son, but it didn't make them feel any better. If only they had known that "if you hide your sins, you will not succeed. If you confess and reject them, you will receive mercy" (Proverbs 28:13, ICB).

Our faithful God is always trustworthy, but sometimes we are not. Sometimes we might think that a lie is the easiest way out, but it only creates bigger problems afterward. When we choose to lie to cover up our wrong choices, our untrustworthy choice can hurt others deeply.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Say or sing your memory verse. Who in the story could have been encouraged by this verse?*
- *How could Jacob's grief have been avoided?*
- *How could the brothers' guilt have been avoided?*

Pray: Pray for those who are hurting, particularly anyone you may have hurt.

Do: Plan to go on a prayer walk with an older family member. Choose a place where there are lots of people. For example: near shops or a busy park. Watch for people who look sad, worried, or in need of comfort. Pray silently for them as they pass by, and ask God for other ways you could bring joy to their lives.





FRIDAY

A Long and Lonely Journey

Fear and loneliness tugged at Joseph's heart as the traders traveled on, away from the hills where his father's tents were nestled, away from his father, Jacob, and his little brother, Benjamin. He wept bitterly at the thought of his loving father waiting for him to come home. *Will I ever see my father again?* he wondered. *And what will the future look like for me, alone and friendless in a strange land?* Such thoughts filled him with fear and sadness.

Then Joseph's heart turned to God. He remembered, "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart" (Psalm 34:18). Right there among the camels, "he gave himself fully to the Lord" (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 214). He prayed that God would be with him in the strange new land he was headed to. God encourages us to trust our future to Him too. **Read Psalm 37:5.**

Joseph's journey had taken him much farther than he ever expected. What began as a trip to see his brothers became a trip to the faraway land of Egypt. He had begun the journey trusting his father and brothers, but now he trusted God fully. He had learned that people are not always trustworthy, but God always is.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Joseph didn't understand it at the time, but God knew Joseph would do great things for Him in the future. How well do you think God knows your future?*

Friday Night

Share and Praise

- **Examine** the roots of a plant. Think about Joseph being the plant and God being the soil. How deep had Joseph's roots grown when he was young? How much did those roots help him in this story? How deep are your roots? What could you do to grow them deeper?
- **Say or sing** your memory verse for your family. Discuss the times this verse would have helped Joseph trust God. Then sing "Tis' So Sweet to Trust in Jesus" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 524).

Family Journal

- This Bible story has helped me think about . . .
- My favorite Bible promise from this week's lesson is . . . , because . . .

Pray

Join hands in a family prayer circle. Thank God that He is always trustworthy, and ask Him to help you trust Him, even when bad things happen.

For You, Parents

Sometimes parenting brings heartache; but be encouraged: "We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8, 9).

SABBATH SPECIAL

Conscience Alley: Play a Game of Choice

We make thousands of choices every day, and every one of them counts; some more than others. With God's help, we can choose to do the right thing, even when the temptation to do wrong things is very strong. Play the following game to explore the choice to be trustworthy or untrustworthy in real-life situations.

Instructions:

1. Divide your family and/or friends into two groups and have them stand in a line facing each other, with an "alley" in between.
2. Explain that for each of the scenarios below, one group is to do their best to convince a player to do the *right* thing in that situation. The other group is to try to convince them to do the *wrong* thing.
3. Read aloud the first scenario below.
4. As the first player, walk slowly down the alley between the groups while they try to convince you to do the right thing or the wrong thing as you walk by.
5. At the end share the choice you made and what you heard that convinced you to do so.

Scenarios:

- Mom asks you to tidy your room, but your friends are waiting for you to play soccer. (The right thing: Tell your friends you will be out as soon as you've tidied your room. The wrong thing: Disobey your mom and sneak out.)
- You find $10 on the sidewalk. (The right thing: Hand the money to an adult; try to find who dropped it. The wrong thing: Secretly pocket the money.)
- You borrowed a friend's ball and lost it.
- On a visit to the store, you see your friend put something in his pocket without paying for it.
- An online game states you need to be 16 years old to play. No one will know you are 8.
- Dad has asked you to rake up the leaves, but you can't find the rake.
- The cashier charges you for two granola bars when you really bought three.
- No one is in the kitchen, so you won't be seen taking a cookie from the tin.
- You said you would help your brother with his homework after school, but your friend has invited you over to play.
- You are supposed to meet your friend at the park in five minutes. You are running late but don't feel like hurrying, because it's a hot day.

