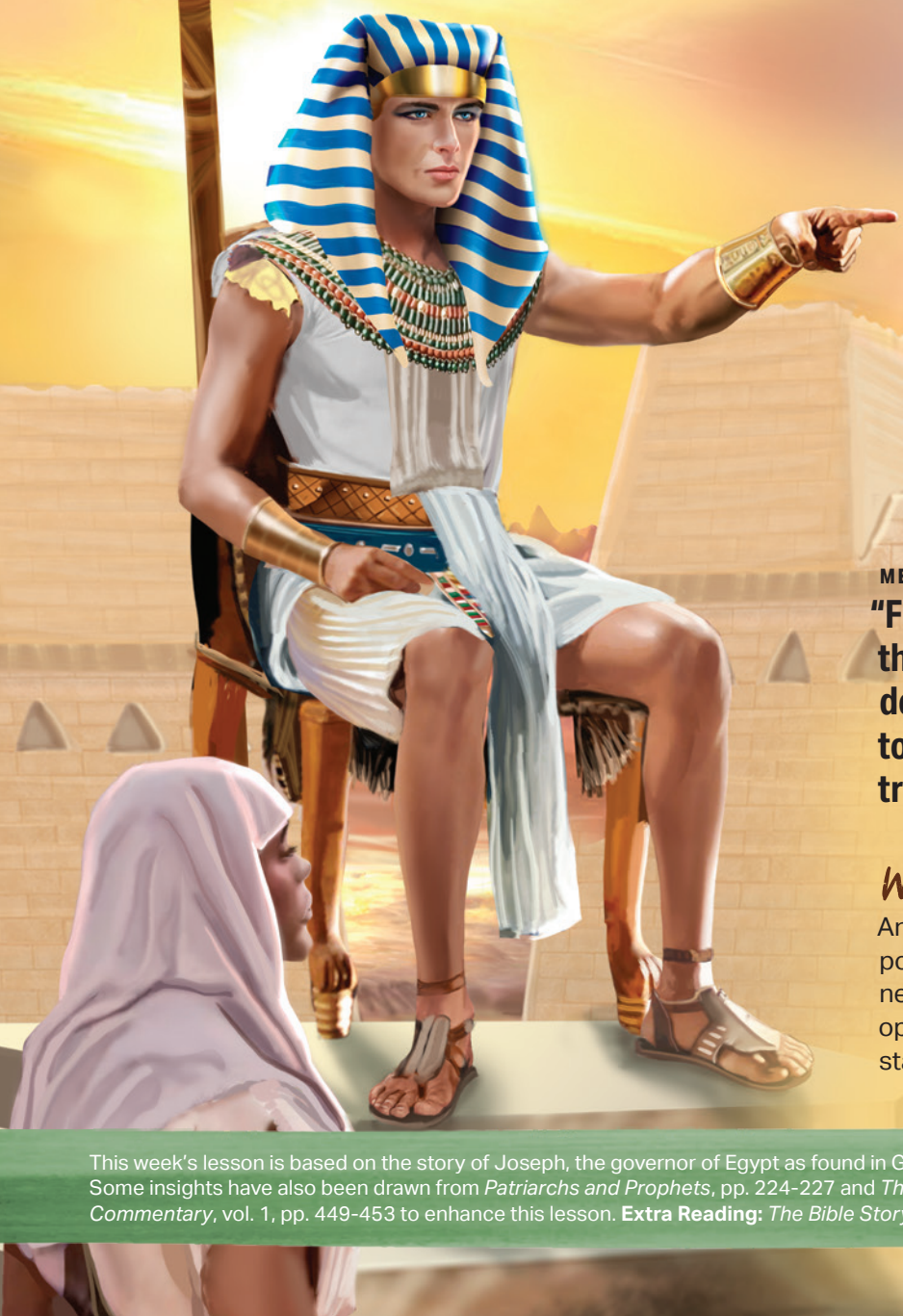
Joseph: Governor of Egypt



GOD LOVES EVERYONE, AND HE WANTS ALL PEOPLE TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO KNOW HIM.

MEMORY VERSE

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3, 4).

Word of the Week—Opportunity:

An experience or a time that makes it possible to learn, know, or do something new. For example: Ethan had the opportunity to learn about Jesus when he stayed with his Christian friend.

This week's lesson is based on the story of Joseph, the governor of Egypt as found in Genesis 41:46-57 and 42. Some insights have also been drawn from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 224-227 and *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 449-453 to enhance this lesson. **Extra Reading:** *The Bible Story*, vol. 2, pp. 61-65.

SUNDAY

A Very Busy Governor

People cleared the streets, whispering with excitement as the sound of galloping hooves and whirling wheels approached. It was Pharaoh's own chariot! Officials raced before it and cried out, "Bow the knee!" The people dropped respectfully while trying to catch a glimpse of the second most important man in Egypt, Pharaoh's governor.

Dressed in fine linen with a beautiful gold chain shining in the light, Joseph may have waved or smiled as he sped past. He had much to do to help these people! How much power had Pharaoh given him to do his work? Read Genesis 41:44.

As he raced throughout all the land of Egypt on his mission, Governor Joseph may have wondered about the twists and turns his life had taken. His powerful God had freed him from a deep pit, freed him from slavery, and freed him from prison. Now at the age of 30 he was the governor of Egypt, with only the king above him!

He looked like an Egyptian, spoke like an Egyptian, had an Egyptian name, and an Egyptian wife. But in his heart he was still Joseph, God's trusting child.

Joseph had clung to his God during difficult times, and those around him had seen that God is real. Now he needed God's help to do the massive job ahead of him. Only then could he continue to show the people of Egypt that God loved everyone, not just him.

He knew that a terrible famine was coming, "so he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt" (Genesis 41:48). These were busy years of planning, organizing, building barns, and storing grain. Seven years later the people were full, the cattle were fat and full, and Joseph's huge barns were full. All because God loved the Egyptians enough to show Pharaoh the future.

All was well . . . for now.

Do: Imagine you are an Egyptian news reporter. Pretend you are sharing Joseph's busy activities on the evening news.

Mission Challenge: Share what you learned from last week (along with your craft from Sabbath School yesterday) with someone much older than you.

Pray: Thank God for loving you and everyone else in the world.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Psalm 67:4 (ICB) says of God, "You guide all the nations on earth." How did God show that He was guiding Egypt?*





☐ MONDAY

Famine Strikes

Suddenly the seven good years ended, just as God had told Joseph they would. Crops withered, garden plants shriveled in the scorching sun, and the ground grew cracked and hard. It wasn't long before the hungry, worried Egyptians took their troubles to Pharaoh, for they had eaten all the food in their homes. Without a moment's hesitation the king told them exactly what to do. What did he tell them? *Read Genesis 41:55.*

The hungry people were happy to follow the king's instructions, for they had learned to trust Joseph little by little during the past seven years. They had seen how wise and kind he was. So when Joseph swung the barn doors wide open and sold the grain to the starving people, they were very grateful to Joseph and his God.

Pharaoh and his helpers had come to know about Joseph's caring God. And now *all* the people had the opportunity to see the wisdom and goodness of Joseph's God close-up. With Joseph's help, God was keeping them alive in a terrible famine. Surely He must love them too.

Our awesome God wants all people to know how much He loves them. The words of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 describe God's love: "Love is patient and kind. . . . Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not become angry easily. . . . Love . . . always continues strong" (ICB). When we know how much God loves us and we love Him back as Joseph did, we will also love others. We will want to give them the opportunity to know God too.

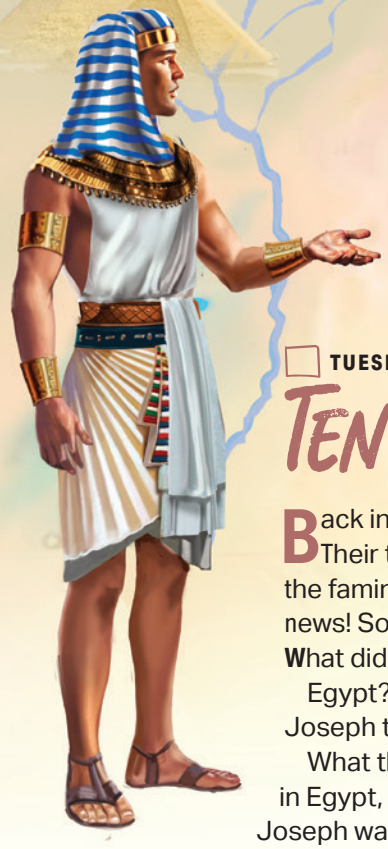
Do: God used His friend Joseph to help Egypt survive a terrible drought. What disasters or climate events are happening near you? Fires, floods, drought, or people fleeing war? With your family, visit the ADRA website in your region to learn about ways you can help.

Pray: Pray 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 back to God, thanking Him for loving everyone that much.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Read **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**. How much do you feel drawn to those who show this kind of love?*
- *Imagine you are shopping at the corner store and that the man serving you doesn't know God. How well could you show him God's love?*





☐ TUESDAY

Ten Hungry Brothers

Do: On the map above, trace with your finger the 250-mile (400-kilometer) journey the brothers would have made from Hebron in Canaan to Egypt.

Back in the land of Canaan, Joseph's family was tired and worried. Their tummies rumbled with hunger and their cows grew thin, for the famine had reached them too. Then Jacob heard some amazing news! Somehow God got word to him that there was grain for sale in Egypt. What did Jacob do? **Read Genesis 42:2.**

Egypt? Go to *Egypt*? The brothers may have shuddered as they remembered selling Joseph to the traders headed for that land. *Would he still be there?* they may have wondered.

What the brothers didn't know was that God had been working in an amazing way down in Egypt, providing the nation with food. They didn't know about Pharaoh's dreams or that Joseph was the governor and grain manager there. They knew only that there was grain to be had, and their families would die without it.

So the 10 hungry brothers saddled up their donkeys and headed south to Egypt, leaving their youngest brother Benjamin at home with old Father Jacob. They traveled over the hills and through the dusty desert, all the way to Egypt.

Romans 11:34 says, "For who has known the mind of the Lord?" Joseph's brothers didn't know what God was doing, and we don't always know either. But we can always trust that *He* knows what He is doing. God could have just sent rain to Egypt as usual, or He could have given the dreams to one of His faithful people in Canaan. But God chose to work through Joseph in a godless country so that many, *many* people could learn about the true God and how much He loves everyone.

Because our loving God wants everyone to have the opportunity to know Him, He sometimes does things we may not understand. But we can always trust that He has a good reason for everything He does.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *"God's wisdom and knowledge have no end!" (Romans 11:33, ICB). How do you feel, knowing that God is so wise and that He always has a very good reason for what He does?*
- *Do you think Joseph's brothers have learned this yet? Why or why not?*

Pray: Using your fingers, think of five people you know who don't yet know Jesus. Fold down a finger as you pray for each one.

WEDNESDAY

Meeting the Governor of Egypt

Joseph glanced up from his work to see yet another group of foreign shepherds coming toward him to seek permission to buy grain. The famine had hit many places hard. God had been so good to prepare Egypt to not only meet their own needs but help out their neighbors too.

The shepherds came closer still. *Could it be?* Imagine Joseph's shocked surprise when he recognized them as his 10 older brothers! Of course they never recognized him, for he dressed and spoke like a true Egyptian. But before he knew it, they were bowing down while he stood tall in front of them. And that's when it hit Joseph: his dreams of long ago were coming true!

Joseph quickly counted them and noticed that Benjamin was missing. Had he also been a victim of his brothers' cruelty? That's when Joseph decided not to tell them who he was; not yet. He wanted to be sure they weren't the same mean brothers who had sold him some 20 years before.

Joseph would test them. "You are spies!" he said sternly (Genesis 42:9).

In fact he accused them of being spies three times. And each time their reply told him a little more. What did Joseph learn about his family? **Read Genesis 42:13.**

What a relief! But that news wasn't enough to convince Joseph their characters had changed. Joseph wasn't sure if he could trust his brothers yet, but he was sure of one thing: God loved his brothers. God loved them enough to keep them alive in a famine, give them another opportunity to choose Him, and to say they were sorry for being so cruel to their brother. Joseph prayed they would.

Because God loves people so much, He gives them opportunities to say they are sorry for things they have done wrong. Sometimes it may look like there will never be an opportunity, but God can make it happen.

Do: Fold a piece of paper in half. On the outside, draw Joseph's dream about the wheat sheaves. Inside the flap, draw Joseph's brothers bowing down to him.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *When has God given you an opportunity to say you're sorry to someone you have hurt?*
- *Second Peter 3:9 says that God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." How do you feel, knowing that God wants everyone to feel sorry for their sins and be saved?*

Pray: Thank God for loving you and giving you opportunities to say you're sorry to those you have hurt.



THURSDAY

Brothers Tested

Parent Faith Talk: Share about a time you felt happy after forgiveness replaced your guilt.

Joseph continued to test his brothers. He wanted to see if they were being honest about Benjamin and if they cared about Father Jacob. Joseph told them that he would put them in prison while one of the brothers went to fetch their youngest brother.

They were thrown into prison for three frightening days. Oh, no! They needed to get home to their anxious father, and the grain needed to get home to their hungry families.

In prison, bitter guilt settled on the miserable brothers as they thought about how terribly they had treated Joseph. They were sure that was why they were in this terrible mess in Egypt.

Then Joseph came up with a different plan. One brother was to stay in prison while the other brothers would go home, take grain to their father, and return with their youngest brother.

The brothers agreed to this plan and talked things over. They didn't know that Joseph could understand every word, because he had spoken only Egyptian to them through an interpreter. What he heard touched his heart, and he rushed from the room to hide his tears. What did he hear? **Read Genesis 42:21, 22.**

Oh how those brother's needed God's love! They wore their guilt like a heavy cloak. They had kept their terrible secret for many years, and whenever things went wrong, they felt as if God was punishing them. Joseph knew this was wrong thinking. He also knew that whenever we feel guilty, God is giving us the opportunity to say we are sorry. Then He can forgive us and shower us with His love. This is a truth God wants *everyone* to know—because He loves them!

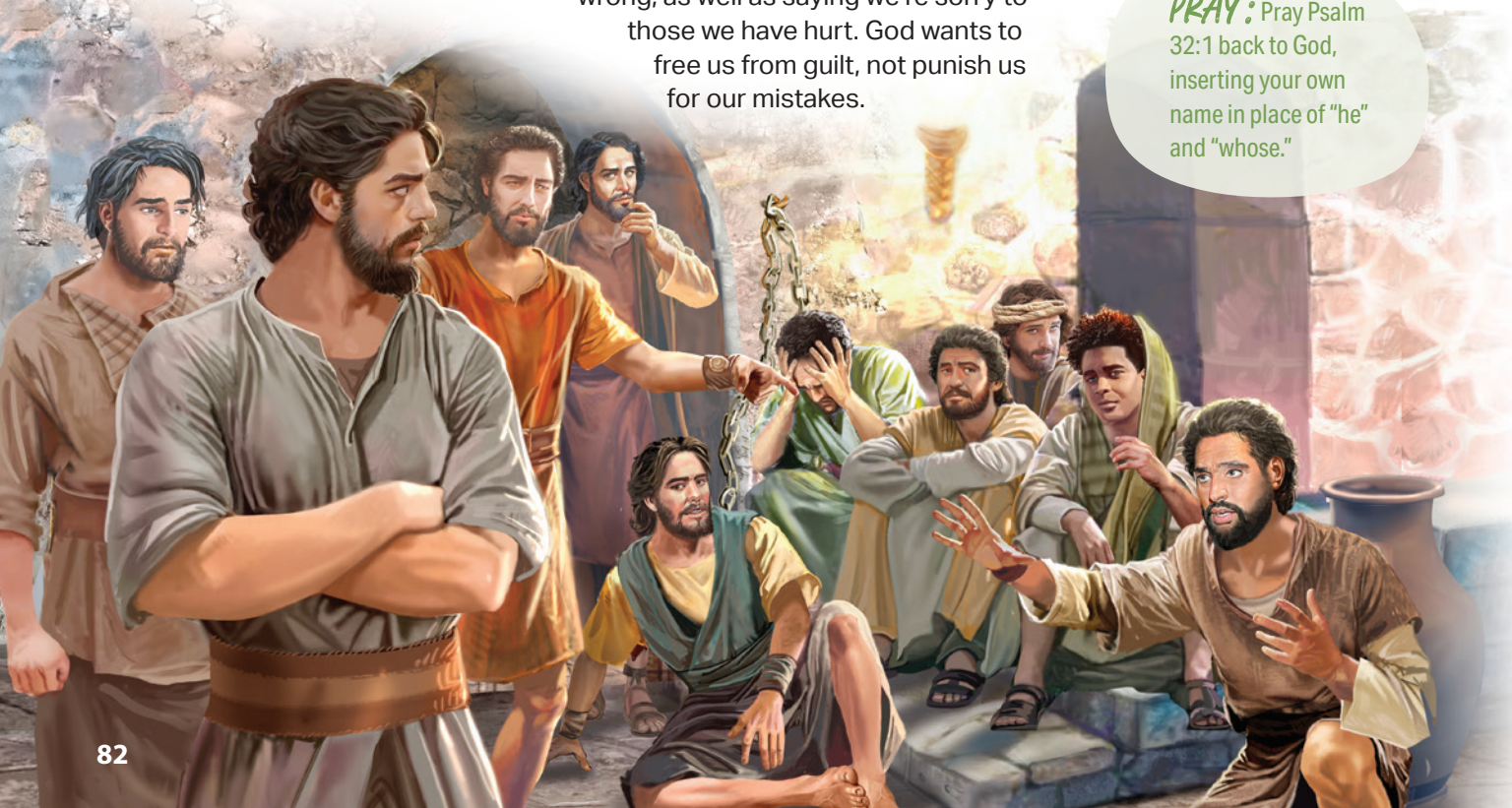
Do: Is there something you feel guilty about? Find a hiding place on your own and go there to tell God and ask for His forgiveness. Then step "out of hiding" into the freedom of being forgiven!

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *How could the brothers have gotten rid of their terrible guilt?*
- *How do you feel when you know you have done something wrong?*
- *How do you feel when you have asked for forgiveness? Read* ***Psalm 32:1****.*

God understands how awful we feel when guilt settles in our hearts. He gives us opportunities to come to Him and say we're sorry for what we have done wrong, as well as saying we're sorry to those we have hurt. God wants to free us from guilt, not punish us for our mistakes.

Pray: Pray Psalm 32:1 back to God, inserting your own name in place of "he" and "whose."





FRIDAY

Homeward Bound with Precious Food

Tears streamed down Joseph's face. He let them fall. He then quickly dried his eyes before returning to his older brothers to play the role of tough governor of Egypt. He chose Simeon to stay behind in prison, and "tied him up while the other brothers watched" (Genesis 42:24, ICB). But in secret Joseph showered his other brothers with kindness. He ordered his servants to fill their sacks with grain, put each man's money back in his sack, and provide extra food for the journey.

After loading up their donkeys, the worried brothers began their long trek home. When they stopped for the night, something surprising happened. *Read Genesis 42:27.*

Terror gripped them all over again, and they said to each other, "What is this that God has done to us?" (Genesis 42:28). Those stressed-out brothers had no idea their loving brother just couldn't bring himself to accept money from his father or brothers.

When they finally reached home, their anxious families heard their frightening story. When the rest of the brothers found their money returned inside their sacks too, fear filled their hearts. Jacob was so distressed that he said, "Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me" (Genesis 42:36).

Poor Father Jacob. If only he knew Joseph was safe in Egypt, sharing God's love with the people there. If only he knew Joseph loved his brothers and was opening the way for them to be freed from their guilt. If only . . .

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Why do you think Joseph waited to tell his brothers who he was?*

Friday Night

Share and Praise

Engage your family in a story circle. Hold hands, then begin telling this week's story of Joseph. After you have told a little, squeeze the hand of the person next to you and have them continue. Keep going until the story is told.

Family Journal

- How many ways did God show His love for the Egyptians in this story? And for Joseph's brothers?
- What is your favorite part of this week's lesson? Why?

Pray

Thank God for your favorite part of this week's story and for His amazing love for you.

For You, Parents

"And the graces of our Saviour's character, implanted in our hearts, will shed around us a precious fragrance. The spirit of love, meekness, and forbearance pervading our life will have power to soften and subdue hard hearts and win to Christ bitter opposers of the faith" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 5, p. 174).



SABBATH SPECIAL

The Sweet Smell of Christ

"God uses us to spread his knowledge everywhere like a sweet-smelling perfume. Our offering to God is this: We are the sweet smell of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are being lost" (2 Corinthians 2:14, 15, ICB). Think about the way Joseph's life was a "sweet-smelling perfume" in Egypt. How did he share God's love with the Egyptians and his brothers?

Perfume Lowdown

- Perfume making is considered both an art and a science. Why do you think that is?
- While the first perfumer recorded in history was a woman in Babylon, the Egyptians were the first to make perfume a part of their culture, creating beautiful glass and stone vessels to hold their balms and oils.
- Rose and Jasmine are the most common floral ingredients in perfume. Musk (once from a deer, now human-made) and vetiver (a woody-smelling root) are common in men's fragrances.
- Perfume makers today can use scents made from chemicals that copy almost every smell you can think of: wet grass, washed laundry, crisp apples . . . even toasted cheese!
- Perfumes are often based on scent families. The four main types are: floral (flowers), fresh (like water or citrus), woody (like a forest), or Oriental (like sandalwood or patchouli).

Your Scent

- Go for a "perfume walk" around your house, garden, or a local park. Pause to smell your favorite things. If possible, collect nice things to bring inside: something herby, floral, woody, sweet . . .
- Create a scent library on paper, noting all the smells you love that might make a great perfume. What would be a terrible smell to bottle?
- You may like to design a bottle for a perfume or men's fragrance called "2 Corinthians 2:15." What qualities, rather than scents, would go into this perfume?

The REAL Perfume: Service Challenge

- Read over **2 Corinthians 2:15** again. As a family brainstorm ways you could be "sweet-smelling perfume" in your community. You might like to: sing at an aged care home, visit a lonely person, have a literature stall at a local fair, pray with someone who is hurting, do some baking and deliver it to a needy family.
- Choose one of your ideas and write a plan outlining how and when you will make it happen.
- Think about how to not only show people about Jesus but tell them about Him too.