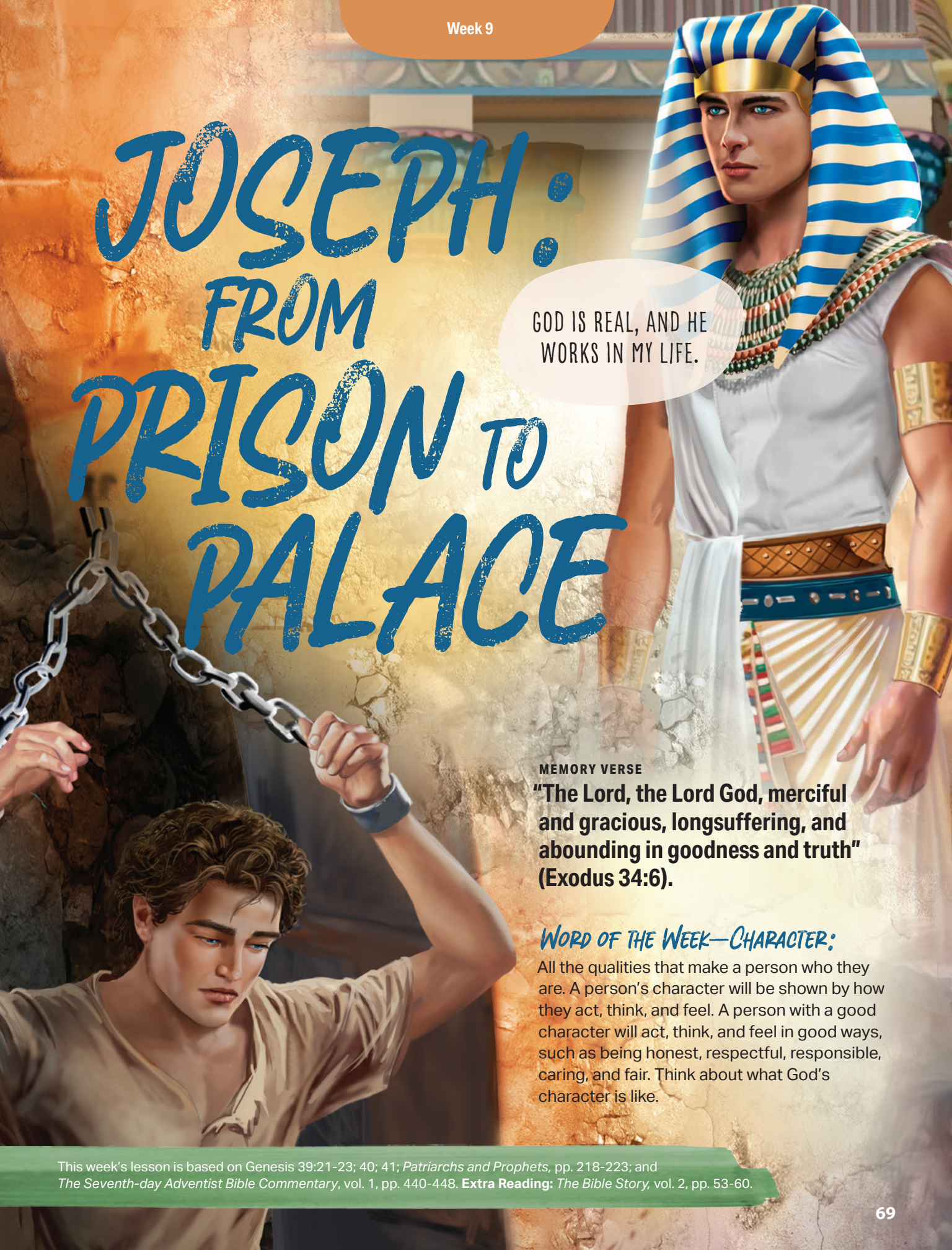
JOSEPH: FROM PRISON TO PALACE



MEMORY VERSE

"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

Word of the Week—Character:

All the qualities that make a person who they are. A person's character will be shown by how they act, think, and feel. A person with a good character will act, think, and feel in good ways, such as being honest, respectful, responsible, caring, and fair. Think about what God's character is like.

This week's lesson is based on Genesis 39:21-23; 40; 41; *Patriarchs and Prophets,* pp. 218-223; and *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 440-448. **Extra Reading:** *The Bible Story,* vol. 2, pp. 53-60.



☐ SUNDAY

In Prison

The prison door slammed with a loud clang. In the dim light Joseph looked at the solid walls surrounding him. He had lost his freedom yet again.

Years had passed since Joseph's older brothers had sold him as a slave. During this time God had helped the slave become supervisor of Potiphar's house. Joseph was so trusted that Potiphar had "left all that he had in Joseph's hand" (Genesis 39:6). What freedom for a slave! But now these prison walls held him truly captive.

It was unfair—he was innocent! How could he prove Potiphar's wife had lied to hurt him? He was just a poor Hebrew slave with no money or powerful friends to help him. Except for One. "But the Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:21).

Joseph knew that the same God who had helped him as a slave was still looking after him as a prisoner. The situation was unfair, lonely, and hard. But he knew God's beautiful character, so He chose to keep trusting Him. What is God's character like? **Read Exodus 34:6,** your memory verse.

Who wouldn't trust a friend like that? So right there in prison, Joseph chose to trust the God who had fulfilled His promises to care for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and who had always cared for Joseph.

Like Joseph, we can trust God's words. The Bible promises, "The Lord Himself . . . will be with you. He will not leave you or forget you. Don't be afraid. Don't worry" (Deuteronomy 31:8, ICB).

Joseph didn't know it yet, but this prison would be his home for the next three years. "But the Lord was with Joseph *and showed him mercy*" (Genesis 39:21). What a beautiful Friend!

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

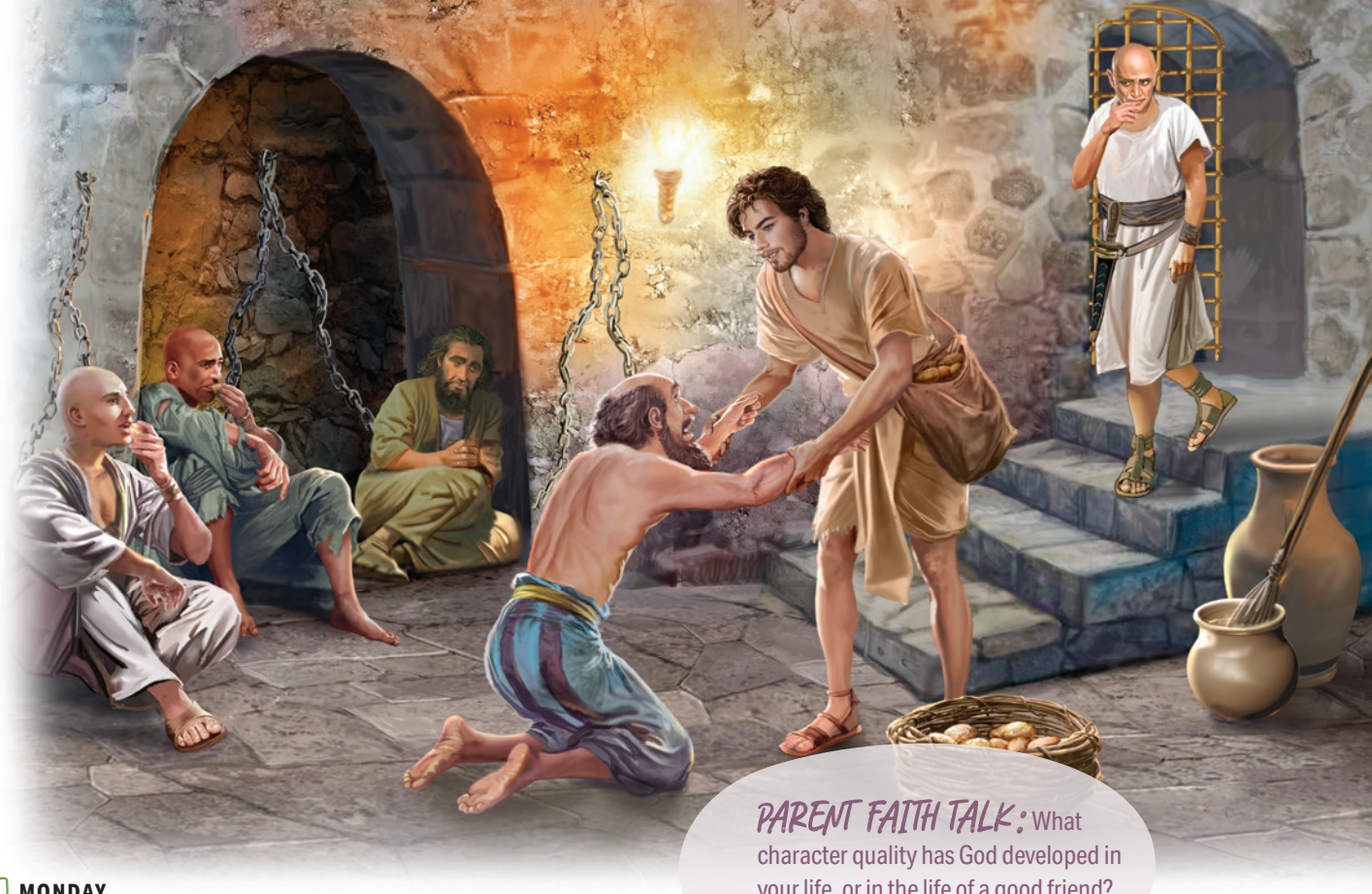
- *Joseph had already learned that God is trustworthy. What else does Joseph's story thus far tell you about God's character? He is . . . ?*

First John 4:8 says, "God is love." He is a real friend we can trust no matter what.

Pray: Thank God for His beautiful character.

Mission Challenge: Pray with your family for the friend you invited to Sabbath School in week 9.

Do: Ask God to help you to be a trustworthy friend. Make a list of friends at school, church, or in your neighborhood. Beside each name, write ideas of things you can say or do to be a friend others can trust.



PARENT FAITH TALK: What character quality has God developed in your life, or in the life of a good friend? Share this to encourage your child.

☐ **MONDAY**

A Leader in Prison

Joseph didn't sit grumbling in a dark corner of the prison cell. No! Instead he looked for ways to be a blessing to others. He had been put into a prison with the king's prisoners. He befriended them, and little by little, they began to trust him. They saw that he was kind, calm, and cheerful. They saw that he wasn't rude or disrespectful to the prison guards. His beautiful character shone like a light in the darkness of the dungeon.

DO: On a piece of paper, write the character quality you would most like God's help with. Put it beside your bed to remind you to pray and ask God to work on this characteristic.

The prison keeper also noticed, and he was impressed. What did he do? **Read Genesis 39:21-23.**

Just as he had been trusted in Potiphar's house, Joseph was now trusted in prison. He was made a leader and put in charge of the other prisoners. The prison keeper did this because "the Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:21). Again, in verse 23, the Bible says, "The Lord was with him." God really, really wants us to know that He is with us too, so He repeated this important message.

Do you think the prison keeper would have put a mean, lying, bad-mouthed prisoner in charge? No way! God was working in Joseph's life, making his character beautiful so he could be a wise and caring leader. "And whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper" (Genesis 39:23).

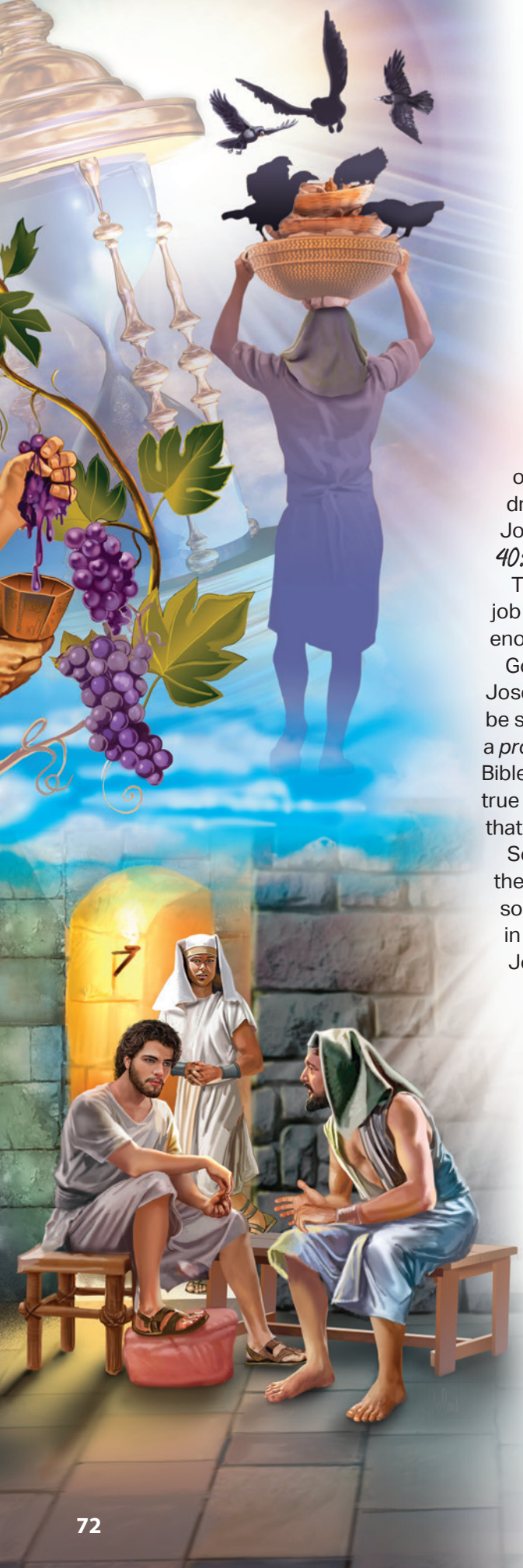
Joseph may not have said much about his God in the prison at first, but the prison keeper and all the prisoners could see that Joseph was different. He showed them, through his actions, that God is kind and good.

Our powerful God can work in our lives to make us friendly, kind, calm, and cheerful too. We may not realize it, but others are watching, and they will see that our loving God is real.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *God is working in your life, just like Joseph's. What character quality would you most like Him to work on and why? For example: patient, forgiving, unselfish, gentle, generous.*

PRAY: Praise God that your character can shine for Him. Tell Him how much you love Him.



TUESDAY

Dreams, Dreams

One morning Joseph noticed that two of the prisoners he cared for in the king's prison were looking particularly sad. The pair had held important roles in the royal household—one was Pharaoh's chief butler and the other his baker—until the day Pharaoh had become angry with them and thrown them into prison. "Why do you look so sad today?" Joseph asked (Genesis 40:7).

They replied, "We both had dreams last night. But no one can explain the meaning of them to us" (Genesis 40:8, ICB).

Joseph smiled. God could do this! He said, "God is the only one who can explain the meaning of dreams. So tell me your dreams" (Genesis 40:8, ICB). They did, and with God's help, Joseph told them what the dreams meant. Read about it in **Genesis 40:9-22.** What does Joseph ask of the butler in verse 14?

The news for the butler was wonderful: he would return to his job in three days! But sadly, the baker would die in three days. Sure enough, that's exactly what happened!

God gave the butler and the baker the dreams. He showed Joseph what they meant, so that God's plans and power could be seen by others. When God shows people the future, it is called a *prophecy*. God shared many prophecies with His people in the Bible, and most of them have already come true. The rest will come true in the future. Fulfilled prophecies show us that God is real and that He can always be trusted.

Sometimes prophecies are shared in dreams, as they were for the butler and the baker. As you grow older, you will learn about some of God's big and important prophecies that were shared in dreams. They will help you to love and trust God more, just as Joseph did.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Why do you think Joseph offered to interpret the dreams?*
- *You may not be able to interpret dreams, but how can you help others to know that God is real?*

Our wonderful God gives and fulfills prophecies so that people will have the opportunity to love and trust Him because they know that He is real.

FAST FACT: A butler was responsible for tasting the king's wine in case someone tried to poison him.

PRAY: Thank God for His prophecies that help you to know that He is real.

WEDNESDAY

Pharaoh's Dreams

Pharaoh paced the palace floor, deeply troubled by his two weird dreams. The images swirled through his mind. **Read Genesis 41:2-7** to find out what Pharaoh dreamed.

What could it mean? Puzzled and anxious, he knew those dreams were important and had something to do with the future. But he just couldn't figure them out. As the sun came up he called for his magicians and wise men. Surely *they* were clever enough to figure out the meaning of his dreams.

Those important royal advisers were considered the wisest men in all of Egypt. They tried to tell the future using the stars and magic. But of course that didn't work. When the God of heaven gives dreams, all the magic in the world will never unlock their meaning. How sad that those men had never heard of God and didn't know of His power.

In the end the wise men and magicians could only tremble and shake their heads. They were no help at all! Pharaoh got really angry, and fear spread throughout the palace. The chief butler heard about the dreams, and he remembered Joseph. What did he say to the king? **Read Genesis 41:9-13.**

The Bible declares, "Among the gods there is none like You, O Lord; nor are there any works like Your works" (Psalm 86:8). Those magicians and wise men had no idea of the truth of those words, but they were about to find out.

The one true God of heaven is the only God that is real and powerful. Some people have never heard of God, so He gives them the opportunity to see that their false gods are not real and cannot help them.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Why couldn't the magicians and wise men interpret the dreams?*
- *What do you think Pharaoh will do next?*

Pray: Thank God that you know He is powerful and real. Pray for those who don't know He is.

Fast Facts:

- In the Hindu religion cows are considered sacred. They are sometimes decorated and worshipped in festivals in India.
- In Vietnam some people place bowls of fresh fruit beside statues of their gods, so things may go well for them.
- In 2017 an estimated 430,000 full-time Christian missionaries were sharing Jesus in a foreign country.



THURSDAY

Joseph's God to the Rescue

The palace runner panted out his request: the king needed to see Joseph—*now*! After a quick shave and a clean set of clothes, Joseph stood before the king of Egypt with his head bowed and a prayer in his heart.

Pharaoh asked Joseph to tell him the meaning of his troubling dream. Joseph knew he couldn't interpret dreams, so he quickly replied, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (Genesis 41:16).

And that is exactly what happened. God explained the dreams to Joseph, and Joseph explained them to Pharaoh. He shared how the fat cows and the plump ears of corn meant that for seven years there would be plenty of food in Egypt because the crops would grow very well. The seven skinny cows and the seven tiny ears of corn meant that there would then be seven long, hard years of famine (hunger) because of a terrible drought (time of no rain).

Imagine how awful that news sounded to the king of Egypt! While he trembled and stared helplessly into the future, Joseph calmly continued. "Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt" (Genesis 41:33). He then gave more wise advice. **Read Genesis 41:34-36.**

Joseph stepped back and waited. He, a slave, had done a daring thing to give advice to a king. But the king's face relaxed as he sat in awe of this foreign prisoner who had outlined such wise plans to save his country. Things might not be so bad after all.

God had done it again through Joseph. Because Joseph had committed his life to God, he had been able to show how real and wonderful the God of heaven is. God can give us wisdom as we tell others about Him too.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *How wise are you? What could you do when you don't feel wise? Read* ***James 1:5****.*
- *How good are you at giving God credit for giving you wisdom? Look for opportunities to do so.*

Do: Make up a tune for James 1:5. Practice it and sing it to your family.

Pray: Place your hand on James 1:5 in your Bible as you ask God to give you wisdom to know when to boldly tell others about Him.





☐ FRIDAY

Governor in Charge

Pharaoh knew Joseph was right: he would need a wise man to help Egypt through this crisis. But where would he find a man like this? He sat pondering, and then the answer came to him. Of course! Joseph was just the man his kingdom needed! He said to his servants, "Can we find a better man than Joseph to take this job? God's Spirit is truly in him" (Genesis 41:38, ICB). Then what did he say to Joseph? *Read Genesis 41:39-41.*

Joseph's beautiful character, his wise words, and his God-given ability to interpret dreams had convinced the king that Joseph's powerful God was real and that He was working in Joseph's life. Potiphar believed this, the prison guard and prisoners had seen this, the king of Egypt knew this, and one day soon the whole of Egypt would know of Joseph's God too.

Joseph's dreadful prison days had finally come to an end. To his surprise, governor's clothes and the king's ring were quickly given to him. He was crowned second-in-command over all the land of Egypt. Truly, "the Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2).

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Read* ***Matthew 25:23*** *and discuss how this relates to Joseph's life. What might it look like in your life?*

Friday Night

Share and Praise

- Say or sing your memory verse and teach it to your family. Have them choose their favorite word from this verse and share why.
- Give each family member a piece of play-dough or salt dough, or a pencil and paper. Create or draw something from part of the story. Share, then sequence them in order of the story.

Family Journal

- How has this week's lesson helped you to know how real God really is?
- What six words would you use to describe Joseph's character in this week's lesson?
- What has Joseph's story taught you about God's character? Add to your list from Sunday. He is . . .

Pray

Gather the family together. Thank God for who He is, each naming one of His amazing character traits.

For You, Parents

God will be active in the lives of your children, just as He was in Joseph's. Only God knows the beautiful witness your child's character will be one day. "Joseph's religion kept his temper sweet and his sympathy with humanity warm and strong, notwithstanding all his trials . . . He is cheerful, for he is a Christian gentleman. God was preparing him . . . for a situation of great responsibility, honor and usefulness, and he was willing to learn." (Ellen G. White, *Letter 3*, 1879).



SABBATH SPECIAL

Digging for Treasures

When archaeologists search and dig carefully for objects from ancient cities, they sometimes find interesting things that help us understand how people lived at certain times in history.

Archaeologists in Egypt have found treasures that tell us about what it was like for Joseph when he lived there thousands of years ago.

Archaeology confirms what the Bible tells us about Joseph becoming second in command to the pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph was given symbols of power such as the king's signet ring, fine linen clothing, a gold chain to wear around his neck, and the Pharaoh's second chariot. Each of these items was important in Egyptian culture.

A blob of hot wax was used to seal an important letter or paper. Before the wax cooled, Joseph would have pressed the king's signet ring into it, leaving an imprint in the wax, such as a symbol, art, name, or initials. This seal showed that the message inside was very important, and that it had the king's authority. The seal had the same importance that a signature has today.

The gold chain was given to honor a person for either being a war hero or for showing wisdom about how to lead a country. Joseph's God-given wisdom about how to get Egypt through the years of famine earned him the gold chain.

It was also an honor for Joseph to be given the Pharaoh's second chariot. It would have been the same as a king or ruler today giving someone his very expensive second car.

Each of these gifts showed the importance of the position Joseph had been given in Egypt. God used him in that position to save Egypt and his family.

Sourced and adapted from: Susanne Binder, "Joseph's Rewarding and Investiture (Genesis 41:41-43) and the Gold of Honour in New Kingdom Egypt," in *Egypt, Canaan and Israel: History Imperialism, Ideology and Literature. Proceedings of a Conference at the University of Haifa, 3-7 May 2009*, ed. S. Bar, D. Kahn, and J.J. Shirley (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 44-64.