

Appreciating Joseph

A Story of Faith, Forgiveness, and God's Guiding Hand



Appreciating Joseph

Copyright © 2026 by R. Allen Hackworth
Illustrations Copyright © 2026 by R. Allen Hackworth

All rights reserved.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise — without prior written permission from the copyright holder, except for brief quotations used in reviews or scholarly works as permitted by copyright law.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible.
Printed in the United States of America.

First Edition

ISBN: 9798349490200
Publisher: R. Allen Hackworth

Dedication

Dedicated to

Parents, grandparents, teachers, and all who desire to help children and families discover the timeless lessons found in God's word. May the life of Joseph inspire every reader to remain faithful during trials, to forgive generously, and to trust that God can transform even life's greatest hardships into remarkable blessings.

". . . ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good. . ."

— Genesis 50:20

About this Book

The story of Joseph is one of the greatest accounts of courage, faith, forgiveness, and divine guidance found anywhere in history. Though betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and imprisoned, Joseph never abandoned his trust in God. In time, God lifted him from the depths of a prison to become the governor of Egypt, placing him in a position to save countless lives during a devastating famine.

This book retells Joseph's remarkable journey in language that is easy to understand while remaining faithful to the biblical record. Joseph's stories teach memorable lessons. These lessons provide meaningful opportunities for families to discuss the principles that Joseph demonstrated throughout his life.

After the story, readers can enjoy word-search puzzles. These reinforce the people, places, and events found in each chapter, thus, making learning both enjoyable and memorable.

Whether read aloud in the home, studied in the classroom, or enjoyed individually, *Appreciating Joseph* reminds us that faith in God, integrity, forgiveness, and perseverance are qualities that never lose their power.

Table of Contents

Dedication and Introduction	3
Chapter One. The Dreamer	5
Chapter Two Dothan	9
Chapter Three Slaves in Egypt	13
Chapter Four the Test	17
Chapter Five the Prison That Became a Classroom	21
Chapter Six the Dreams of Pharaoh	25
Chapter Seven Preparing for the Famine	29
Chapter Eight the Brothers Bow Before Joseph	33
Chapter Nine Benjamin Comes to Egypt	37
Chapter Ten Judah's Greatest Sacrifice	41
Chapter Eleven "I Am Joseph"	45
Chapter Twelve a Family Reunited	49
Word-Search Puzzles	55
Puzzle Answers.....	106

CHAPTER ONE

The Dreamer

Based on the biblical account in Genesis 37

The first rays of morning sunlight spilled across the hills of Canaan, painting the rocky slopes with shades of gold and amber. A cool breeze drifted through the terebinth trees as thousands of sheep slowly stirred from their night's rest. Camp was already awake. Servants cleaned tents. Women prepared the morning meal. Young shepherds gathered staffs and water skins. The air carried the familiar sounds of bleating lambs, lowing cattle, and the cheerful songs of birds greeting another day. Standing quietly outside his tent was Jacob.

Time was turning his beard white. His face bore the lines of hardship, grief, and years spent beneath the open skies. Yet this morning his eyes rested on one person. Joseph, seventeen years old, was strong, kind, and quick to smile. Unlike many young men, Joseph noticed the needs of others before his own. Whether helping an injured servant, rescuing a frightened lamb, or comforting a child, compassion seemed as natural to him as breathing.

Jacob watched him with pride. "Rachel," he whispered to himself, "how you would have loved to see him today." The memory of Joseph's mother had never faded. Even after many years, Jacob still remembered her gentle voice, her laughter, and the day she placed the tiny infant, Joseph, into his arms.

Now that little boy had become a young man. Jacob stepped back inside his tent. Resting upon a cedar chest lay something wrapped carefully in fine linen. His hands trembled slightly as he unfolded it. A magnificent robe. Deep crimson. Royal blue. Rich purple. Golden threads woven through the fabric caught the sunlight until the robe almost seemed alive. It took months to complete. Every thread reminded Jacob of Rachel. Every stitch carried a father's love.

Jacob called softly, "Joseph."

Joseph turned immediately. "Yes, Father?"

"Come." Joseph approached respectfully.

Jacob lifted the robe. "I have something for you."

Joseph looked at the beautiful garment in amazement. "For me?"

5 Jacob smiled. "For you."

As the robe settled across Joseph's shoulders, tears gathered in the old man's eyes. "You have brought great joy to my life," Jacob said quietly. "May the Lord guide your steps all your days."

Joseph embraced his father. "Thank you."

Neither of them realized that several nearby men had stopped their work. Joseph's brothers. Their eyes never left the colorful robe. Silence settled among them. Then one finally spoke.

"So, our little brother now dresses like a prince."

Another son laughed bitterly. "Father loves him more than the rest of us. It has always been that way."

Their words were quiet, but their hearts were loud with anger. Something dangerous had been growing inside of them. Jealousy. Over the following weeks, Joseph faithfully worked beside his brothers. He never considered himself better than they were. He worked beneath the same blazing sun. He walked the same rocky hills. He cared for the same sheep. But the robe followed him everywhere. Every glimpse of those brilliant colors reminded the brothers of what they believed was unfair.

The distance between Joseph and his brothers grew wider every day. Then came the dreams. One night Joseph awoke before sunrise. His heart raced. The dream had seemed more real than waking life. Later that morning he found his brothers. "I had a dream."

"What dream?"

Joseph answered honestly. "We were binding sheaves in the field." He paused. "My sheaf stood upright."

The brothers exchanged puzzled glances.

"And your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down." Silence. Then angry laughter.

"So! You intend to rule over us? You believe we'll bow before you?"

Joseph immediately realized how upset they were. "I only told you what I saw."

But the words only made them angrier. Days passed. Then another dream came. This one was even stranger. Again, Joseph gathered his family.

"I dreamed that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down before me."

Even Jacob looked troubled. "My son," he asked gently, "do you mean that your mother, your brothers, and I will someday bow before you?"

Joseph lowered his eyes. "I only know what I saw."
Jacob said nothing more. But like Joseph's brothers, he remembered the dream. Far away, beyond the hills where the shepherds watched their flocks, the God of Abraham was quietly arranging events no human being could yet understand. A caravan was already making its slow journey toward Egypt. A prison cell waited. A palace stood ready. A throne remained empty. And the young shepherd wearing a colorful robe had no idea that every step of his life was leading him toward a destiny only God could see.

Troubled and worried, Joseph knew his brothers did not like him. Feelings of love, little by little, had faded, but Joseph did not know how deeply their anger was felt. He thought, "It's because of my coat from father, and it's because of my dreams.





Chapter Two

Dothan

Based on the biblical account in Genesis 37:12–36.

The summer sun climbed steadily over the hills of Canaan. Heat shimmered across the rocky landscape as the flocks grazed farther north than usual. Grass had become scarce near Hebron, forcing Jacob's sons to search for better pasture.

Days passed. No word came from them. Jacob stood outside his tent, gazing toward the distant hills.

"They have been gone too long," he said quietly.

Joseph approached. "You wished to see me, Father?"

Jacob nodded. "My sons have taken the flocks toward Shechem. I have heard nothing from them." His weathered face showed concern. "I want you to find them."

Joseph answered without hesitation. "I will go."

Jacob placed both hands upon his son's shoulders. "Return safely and bring me news."

Joseph smiled. "I will." Within minutes he was walking north, carrying only a staff, a waterskin, bread, dried fruit, and the beautiful robe his father had given him. He had no idea it would be the last peaceful morning of his youth. The journey to Shechem took several days. The roads twisted through valleys and over rocky ridges where shepherds, merchants, and travelers crossed paths. Dust clung to Joseph's sandals. The afternoon sun beat upon his shoulders. Still, he continued.

When he finally reached Shechem, he searched every hillside. The sheep were nowhere to be found. Nor were his brothers. Joseph stopped beside a well, puzzled. A stranger noticed the young traveler.

"Who are you looking for?"

"My brothers," Joseph answered. "They are shepherds."

The man thought for a moment.

"I met your brothers. We talked. I heard them say they were moving on to Dothan."

Joseph smiled gratefully. "Thank you."

Without resting, he turned toward Dothan. Late the next afternoon the hills of Dothan appeared on the horizon. Far away, sheep dotted the slopes like small, puffy clouds. Joseph could finally see his brothers. His heart lifted. He waved. It was getting cold so Joseph put on his colorful coat. From that distance, the brothers saw him immediately. One pointed toward the hill.

"There he is."

Another's face darkened.

"We don't need this."

Silence settled among them. Then Simeon spoke through clenched teeth.

"Here comes the dreamer."

Another brother answered,

"Let's kill him."

The words hung heavily in the air.

"Then we'll tell Father that a wild beast devoured him. Let's see what becomes of his dreams."

Hatred had finally found its voice. Reuben felt a chill. The oldest brother knew this could never be undone.

"If blood is shed," he thought, "our family will never recover." He quickly stepped forward. "No."

His brothers looked at him.

"Do not kill him."

He pointed toward a nearby cistern.

"Throw him into the pit. But don't lay a hand on him."

The others reluctantly agreed. Reuben secretly planned to return later, rescue Joseph, and take him safely home to Jacob. No one suspected his plan. Joseph hurried the last few steps.

"Brothers!"

There was no welcome. No smiles. No laughter. Hands suddenly grabbed him.

"What are you doing?" Joseph yelled.

They tore the magnificent robe from his shoulders. Joseph struggled.

"Please! Stop!"

Strong hands dragged him across the rough ground. His knees struck sharp stones. Dust filled his eyes. The opening of a deep cistern appeared before him. It was empty, dark, and silent.

"No!" Joseph cried.

His brothers shoved him over the edge. He fell. His hands scraped the rocky wall. Then THUD! He landed hard on the floor of the pit. Pain shot through his body. Above him, faces looked down. Some angry. Some cold. One filled with regret. Joseph stood slowly.

"Please!" His voice echoed upward. "What have I done?"

No one answered. He reached toward the opening.

"Please don't leave me here!"

Still no answer. Only footsteps walking away. The brothers returned to their meal as though nothing had happened. Bread was broken. Water was poured. Conversation resumed. Only one voice interrupted the silence. It was Joseph's. From deep below came desperate cries.

After Joseph had been dropped into the pit, Ruben went into the field to take care of some new lambs.

"Reuben! Judah! Please!"

Every word echoed against the stone walls. Some tried not to listen. Others hardened their hearts. Later that day, Judah noticed something moving across the desert. A caravan. Dozens of camels slowly crossed the valley. The merchants laughed together as the camel bells rang softly beneath the afternoon sun. Judah watched them. Then an idea formed.

"Why kill our brother?"

The others looked at him.

"If he dies, we gain nothing."

He pointed toward the approaching caravan.

"Let's sell him. He'll disappear forever. We won't have his blood on our hands."

The brothers considered his words. Silver was more attractive than murder. One by one, they agreed. The merchants stopped beside the camp. The brothers discovered that their loads included spices, fragrant gum, myrrh, woven cloth, and costly merchandise destined for Egypt.

Negotiations began. The traders had liked the idea of buying a slave to be sold in Egypt. They examined Joseph as though he were no different from one of the camels or sheep. Strong. Healthy. Young. A good slave. The price was settled. Twenty pieces of silver. The coins clinked together as they changed hands.

Joseph stared in disbelief.

"You cannot do this."

He looked from one brother to another.

"Please, I'm your brother."

No one answered.

Chains were fastened around Joseph's wrists. The caravan began moving south. Joseph looked back one last time. His brothers grew smaller and then disappeared beyond the hills. For the first time in his life, Joseph was completely alone.

After helping with the new lambs, Reuben returned to the cistern. He did not know that Joseph had been sold as a slave. He hurried toward the opening. "Joseph!" he shouted. No answer. He looked inside. The pit was empty. His heart stopped. He tore his clothing in grief. He thought, "The boy is gone! What shall I do?"

When he learned what his brothers had done, that they had sold Joseph as a slave, he felt even more despair. But it was too late. The caravan had vanished into the desert.

In preparation for returning home, two brothers carried Joseph's colorful coat to a spot where a goat had been killed. The goat's blood stained the brilliant threads. The robe that had once represented a father's love now became part of a terrible lie. The brothers folded the torn and stained coat carefully. Soon, Jacob would see it. And his heart would break.

Far to the south, beneath a sky filled with countless stars, Joseph walked beside the camels. His hands remained bound. His future was unknown. The road stretched endlessly toward Egypt. Yet above every step, God was still guiding His servant. Joseph could not yet see it. But the darkest chapter of his life was becoming the doorway to God's greatest purpose.



Chapter Three

Slave in Egypt

Based on the biblical account in Genesis 39

The caravan moved steadily south. Each sunrise found Joseph farther from the hills of Canaan. Each sunset carried him closer to a land he had never seen. The bells around the camels' necks chimed softly as they crossed rocky valleys, dry riverbeds, and endless stretches of desert.

The merchants spoke languages Joseph could not understand. At night they gathered around campfires, laughing together while preparing meals. Joseph sat apart from them. His hands were no longer tightly bound, but he remained their prisoner. Many times, he gazed toward the northern horizon. Somewhere beyond those distant hills his father believed he was dead. The thought pierced his heart more deeply than the ropes ever had.

Weeks later the caravan reached the fertile valley of the Nile. Joseph had never imagined such a place. The dry wilderness disappeared behind him. Before him stretched green fields watered by mighty canals. Palm trees lined the riverbanks. Fishing boats drifted across the broad waters. Farmers guided oxen through rich black soil unlike anything he had ever seen. The great river seemed almost alive.

"That," one merchant proudly announced, "is the Nile."

Joseph stared in amazement. Soon another sight appeared on the horizon. Massive stone buildings rose above the city. Columns towered toward the sky. Temples gleamed in the sunlight. Tall statues guarded enormous gateways. In one unlikely location, two donkeys carried overflowing baskets of grain.

In other areas, craftsmen hammered bronze. Potters shaped clay. Perfume sellers filled the air with the fragrance of cinnamon, frankincense, and myrrh. Children laughed. Soldiers marched. Priests in white linen walked toward magnificent temples.

Joseph had never seen such buildings. Nor had he ever felt so alone. Finally, the caravan entered the slave market. One by one the prisoners were examined. Buyers inspected hands. They measured strength. They bargained over prices. Joseph stood silently.

He prayed. "Lord...I do not understand why this has happened. But You are still my God. Please do not leave me."

An Egyptian official had entered the marketplace. He was dressed in spotless white linen trimmed with gold. A finely crafted sword hung at his side. Servants followed behind him. His bearing commanded respect. The merchants immediately bowed, and someone announced,

"Potiphar has arrived."

Joseph watched carefully. Potiphar served Pharaoh himself as captain of the royal guard. His responsibility was one of the highest positions in Egypt. A leader in the caravan stepped forward.

"My lord, I have a strong, young Hebrew."

Potiphar looked at Joseph. He examined his hands. His shoulders. His eyes. There was intelligence there. And something else. Integrity. After only a few moments, Potiphar nodded. "I'll take him." The purchase was completed. Joseph belonged to another master.

Potiphar's estate was unlike anything Joseph had imagined. Beautiful gardens surrounded the home. Tall palm trees shaded peaceful walkways. Pools reflected the blue Egyptian sky. Servants hurried through spacious courtyards. In other location on the property, storehouses overflowed with grain. Livestock filled enormous pens. Everything operated with remarkable order.

Joseph was assigned simple duties. Sweeping courtyards. Carrying water. Feeding animals. Organizing supplies. He performed every task faithfully. He did not complain. He did not become bitter. Whether the work was great or small, Joseph gave it his best. Weeks became months. Something unusual began happening. Everything Joseph touched prospered. Fields produced abundant harvests. The livestock increased. Business flourished. Servants respected him. Even difficult tasks seemed to succeed under his care.

Potiphar noticed and said, "This Hebrew is different."

One steward nodded. "Everything he manages succeeds."

Potiphar watched Joseph carefully for many days. Finally, he called him.

"Joseph, come here."

"Yes, my lord."

"I have observed your work. You are honest, dependable, and you waste nothing." He paused. "From this day forward, you will oversee my household."

Joseph was stunned. "My lord, you trust me?"

Potiphar smiled slightly. "I trust what I have seen."

Responsibilities continued to grow. Joseph supervised servants. He organized harvests. He managed livestock. He purchased supplies. He kept careful records. Every evening Potiphar found everything exactly as it should be. Eventually the Egyptian placed nearly all his estate under Joseph's care.

The scriptures later record that Potiphar concerned himself with nothing except the food he ate. That was the measure of trust Joseph had earned. Yet success never changed Joseph. He remembered the sheep of Canaan. He remembered Jacob's gentle voice. He remembered his brothers. Sometimes, standing beneath Egypt's brilliant stars, he wondered if he would ever see home again. He often whispered the same prayer. "Lord, my life is in Your hands."

Years earlier Joseph had dreamed that God had a purpose for his life. Standing in Egypt, that promise seemed impossible. He was still a slave, still separated from his family, still living in a foreign land. Yet something unseen was happening.

God was preparing Joseph, not merely for greater responsibility, but for leadership over an entire nation. The lessons of humility, faithfulness, patience and trust could not have been learned from a throne. They were learned in the quiet service of another man's house. Joseph did not yet know it, but every ordinary day in Potiphar's household was shaping the future ruler of Egypt.





Potiphar buys Joseph as a slave.

Chapter Four

The Test

"A person shows true character when no one seems to be watching."

Joseph had now lived in Egypt for several years. He had arrived as a frightened young slave, but he no longer felt like the confused teenager who had been pulled from a dry pit in Canaan. Each morning, he rose before sunrise. He thanked God for another day and then began organizing the many tasks that kept Potiphar's great estate running smoothly.

The beautiful gardens bloomed with colorful flowers throughout the year. Palm trees swayed gently in the warm Egyptian breeze. Pools reflected the deep blue sky while birds sang among the branches. Servants swept the stone walkways until they shone. Farmers harvested grain from nearby fields. Shepherds tended hundreds of sheep and goats. Storehouses overflowed with wheat, corn, barley, oil, spices, and precious fabrics.

Joseph knew where everything belonged. He knew every servant by name. He knew every field, every animal, every storage room, and every account. Nothing escaped his careful attention.

Potiphar had never known anyone as dependable as Joseph. One afternoon Potiphar stood on the balcony overlooking his magnificent estate. Everywhere he looked, he saw order instead of confusion. Prosperity had replaced waste. The servants worked with confidence because Joseph treated them fairly.

Potiphar smiled. "I no longer worry about my household," he told one of his officers. "Joseph is as trustworthy as any man I have ever known."

Soon, Potiphar placed everything under Joseph's authority. Every servant answered to Joseph. Every harvest was counted by Joseph. Every purchase was approved by Joseph. Only one thing remained under Potiphar's personal control, his own household and family.

When Joseph saw Potiphar and his wife standing together in their formal clothing, he thought, "Great beauty is found in Egypt." And in his heart, he vowed he would always be an honorable servant working for Potiphar and his wife.



Potiphar, Captain of the Royal Guard, with His Wife

God continued to bless everything Joseph touched. But blessings are often followed by difficult tests. Potiphar's wife noticed Joseph every day. She saw that he was handsome and intelligent. She saw that everyone respected him. Instead of honoring her husband, she allowed sinful thoughts to grow in her heart. Day after day, she tried to persuade Joseph to do something he knew was wrong.

Each time Joseph answered with kindness but complete firmness.

"My master trusts me with everything he owns," Joseph said. "How could I betray his confidence? More importantly, how could I commit such a great sin against God?"

Joseph knew that doing right is not always easy. Sometimes the greatest victories happen when we quietly refuse to do what we know is wrong.

Still, the temptation did not disappear. Every day brought another invitation. Every day Joseph gave the same answer.

"No."

He would not betray Potiphar. He would not betray God. One afternoon Joseph entered the house to finish his work. Most of the servants were outside caring for the gardens and animals. The house was unusually quiet. Potiphar's wife approached Joseph once again. She pleaded with him to stay.



Joseph immediately turned to leave. As he hurried toward the doorway, she grabbed hold of his outer garment. Joseph refused to stop. Leaving his garment behind, he ran outside into the sunlight. He would rather lose his piece of clothing rather than lose his honor.

Potiphar's wife stood alone, holding the garment in her hands. Anger quickly replaced temptation. If Joseph would not give her what she wanted, she would destroy him. She called loudly for the servants. When they came running, she falsely accused Joseph of attacking her. The garment in her hand became the false evidence she used to support her lie. Later that day, Potiphar returned home. His wife repeated the same story.

Joseph stood silently before his master. He knew he had done nothing wrong. But sometimes truth is hidden for a season.

Potiphar listened to his wife. His face became hard with disappointment and anger. Without a fair trial, without witnesses, without hearing Joseph's side, Potiphar ordered that Joseph be taken away. The guards placed heavy chains around Joseph's wrists.

Once again, Joseph found himself leaving everything behind. Years earlier, his brothers had sold him into slavery. Now, after faithfully serving his master, he was being led away as a prisoner. The massive prison doors slowly opened. The iron gate slammed shut behind him. The echo rang through the dark stone corridors. Joseph was alone. Yet he was not abandoned. The same God who had been with Joseph in the pit, the same God who had been with Joseph as a slave would also be with him inside the prison.

And although Joseph could not yet see it, God was quietly preparing him for the greatest responsibility of his life.

