

Experience the Word

Experience the Word is an experiential storytelling framework which begins in Sunday morning children's faith formation and carries into worship as the Bible reading for the day.

In Sunday School, we begin in a room around tables with chairs. The introduction remains the same for each Experience the Word, and we review the words and motions for this. After that, children and youth who are readers read through the story together, taking turns line by line. If the children are too young to read on their own, we talk about what we know about the story (we often watch a short video of the story during the opening gathering time) and try to put it in order. Then, we wonder together what characters and props we might need to tell the story.

Next, we move to another room that has a completely cleared floor with plenty of room for movement. Each person volunteers for a part (there is always room for everyone who wants to participate), and sometimes we have two of the same character. Each character receives their simple costume, props, and starting place. Then, the narrator slowly reads the story while the story facilitator uses the questions and stage directions in italics to help each character use their body to show the story. At the end, we move back to the first room and ask, "What can we learn about God from this story?"

During worship, we let the whole congregation peek in as we tell the story again. We include everyone who wants to be a part of the story (even those who weren't in Sunday School with us that day), and encourage the congregation to respond with gestures (such as raising their hands at certain parts) and spoken responses of "the crowd" (like "Amen!"). After we Experience the Word together in this way, the pastor preaches a sermon on the same story, tying Sunday School and worship together in a way that includes and reaches all ages.

Included in this file are the full script, the introduction on its own, and the story which the children and youth read.

Experience the Word: Joseph and his Brothers

Characters:

Jacob/Israel

Brothers

Joseph

Traders

Props:

Head scarf for Jacob

Name tags for brothers (Hi, my name is “Brother”, 1 for Joseph)

Coat of Many Colors

Collapsible play tunnel for pit

Head scarves for traders

Bag of money

Short piece of rope with a slip knot on one end

Black head scarf for Jacob

Narrator read from the pulpit. The traders are far off to the right side with the money bag and rope. Jacob is standing in the middle holding the coat of many colors. The brothers are sitting in a line behind Jacob. Joseph is second to last in line.

(The narrator begins:)

Today, we are going to experience one of God's stories together.

God's story is big: *(everyone stretches arms out wide)*

it begins before the beginning of time, *(everyone stretches to the right)*

it continues today in our lives, *(everyone returns to the center)*

and it extends beyond the end of everything. *(everyone stretches to the left)*

God's story is about people:

old people, *(old people raise hands)*

young people, *(young people raise hands)*

and folks somewhere in the middle, *(everyone else raises hands)*

women and girls, *(women and girls raise hands)*

men and boys, *(men and girls raise hands)*

rich and poor, people from cultures we do not understand

and our neighbors right next door. *(shake hands with someone nearby)*

God's story is about love:

God's love for us, *(everyone points to themselves)*

love for everything God has ever created, *(everyone gestures outward)*

love for the whole cosmos, *(everyone gestures upward)*

and God's story is about us *(everyone points to themselves)*

learning to love God *(everyone points up)*

and one another, too *(everyone points at all the other people)*

God's story is a very important story, perhaps the most important story, and today we are going to be a part of one part of it.

This is Jacob. Hello Jacob!

(wave)

Jacob was blessed by God to be the father of the people of God, and he had twelve sons!

(sons stand up and strike poses)

Of all of his sons, Jacob loved Joseph best. He even gave Joseph a precious coat of many colors to show his love.

(put the coat on Joseph)

Every time Joseph's brothers saw Joseph's coat, they were reminded that their father Jacob loved him more than them. This made them jealous.

(what does it look like when you are jealous?)

One night, when everyone was sleeping,

(lay down to sleep)

Joseph had a dream. He couldn't wait to tell his brothers all about it! He woke them up.

(wake up, brothers!)

Then he told them his dream. He said that he and his brothers were harvesting grain in a field.

(what would it look like to harvest grain?)

Then, all of a sudden, his brothers' bundles of grain formed a circle around him

(form a circle around Joseph)

And bowed down to him.

(bow down to Joseph)

His brothers didn't like that one bit!

(what do you look like when you are angry about something?)

They said, "Do you think you are better than us, that we should bow down to you? Never!"

On another night, when everyone was sleeping,

(lay down to sleep)

Joseph had a dream. He couldn't wait to tell his brothers and his father Jacob all about it! He woke them up.

(wake up, brothers!)

Then he told them his dream. He saw the night sky, and the sun, the moon, and the stars all bowed down to him!

(bow down)

This made father AND his brothers angry.

(what do you look like when you are angry?)

They said, "You are not a king! We will never bow to you!" The brothers were so angry that Jacob sent them to a far away field to cool off for a bit.

(Joseph and Jacob move to below the pulpit, the brothers take a journey that ends where they started)

After a time, Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers.

(wave goodbye and head to the brothers by a long route)

When his brothers saw him, they said, "Here comes that dreamer! Let's get rid of him!"

(what do you look like when you are frustrated and ready to do something about it?)

They took Joseph's coat,

(take his coat)

and threw him in a deep, dark hole.

(stand in the middle of the ring of the tunnel and pull it up over your head)

They thought about leaving him there, but soon some traders came by.

(traders arrive)

They traded their brother for 20 pieces of silver, and he was carried off to Egypt as a slave.

(get out of the hole, rope around wrist, follow traders)

The brothers returned to their father Jacob with Joseph's robe. They told him that Joseph had been attacked by a wild animal and died. Jacob was very sad.

(change to black head scarf)

This is NOT the end of the story. But maybe it is enough of the story for today. To be continued...