

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 Pharoah

Characters:

Joseph

2 Prisoners

Pharoah

Props:

Long rope tied with three handcuff knots for Joseph and prisoners

Headdress for Pharoah <https://www.firstpalette.com/craft/pharaoh-headdress.html>

White/gold scarf for Pharoah's shoulders

Pitcher for cupbearer

7 fat cows (or large popsicle stick puppets)

7 skinny cows (or large popsicle stick puppets)

7 healthy ears of corn (or large popsicle stick puppets)

7 sick ears of corn (or large popsicle stick puppets)

smaller crown for Joseph

blue scarf for Joseph's shoulders

Narrator reads from lectern. Joseph standing in the middle with center handcuff knots on. Prisoners sitting to either side of Joseph. Pharoah "sleeping" on piano bench. Group(s) of seven sitting in front pews.

(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 Joseph. Hello Joseph!

(waves awkwardly)

Joseph has had a lot of hard times. At this point in the story, Joseph is in jail for something he didn't do. He was there for a long time.

(what do you look like when you have lost hope?)

After a while, Joseph was joined in jail by two of Pharaoh's servants.

(servants pop up and put their hands in the handcuff knots)

The two servants were plagued by bad dreams.

(what do you look like when you have a bad dream?)

When Joseph heard that his friends were having bad dreams, he knew that he could help. He prayed to God to understand their dreams...

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

And God answered Joseph's prayers! Joseph was able to tell Pharaoh's servants what their dreams meant.

(Celebrate together!)

Later on, Joseph was alone in jail again, and one of the servants was back to serving Pharaoh.

(one servant sits back down, the other gets out of the handcuffs, picks up the pitcher, and goes over to Pharaoh, who wakes up)

Pharaoh had just woken up from a strange dream, and was wondering what it meant.

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

The servant remembered how Joseph helped him when he was in jail.

(what do you look like when you remember something important?)

He told Pharaoh, "My friend Joseph could explain your dream to you."

Pharaoh said, "Go find Joseph!"

So the servant went and found Joseph and brought him to Pharaoh.

(bring Joseph to Pharaoh with the handcuffs still on)

Joseph said, "Tell me your dream. I will pray to God for the meaning."

Pharoah said, "I dreamed that I was standing by the Nile and saw one, two, three, four, five, six, seven fat, healthy cows."

(People hold up seven healthy cows one at a time.)

"Next, I saw one, two, three, four, five, six, seven sick, skinny cows."

(hold up 7 sick cows in your opposite hand, one at a time)

"Then, the sick cows ate the healthy cows all up!"

(have the sick cows eat the healthy cows, and then put the healthy cows down out of sight)

"That is a strange dream," said Joseph. "Was that it?"

"No," said Pharoah, "There's more."

(put down the sick cows)

"I was standing in a field, and I saw one, two, three, four, five, six, seven healthy, delicious ears of ripe corn."

(people hold up seven healthy ears of corn one at a time)

"Next, I saw one, two, three, four, five, six, seven ears of sick, rotten corn"

People hold up seven sick ears of corn one at a time)

"Then, the sick ears ate up the healthy ears until they were all gone."

(have the sick corn eat the healthy corn, and then put the healthy corn down out of sight)

"What could this mean?" asked Pharoah.

(What do you look like when you are asking a question?)

Joseph prayed to God to ask what Pharoah's dream might mean.

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

When he finished, he said to Pharoah, "God told me what your dream meant. Egypt will have one, two, three, four, five, six, seven years of good harvests with plenty of food."

(people hold up 7 thumbs up, one at a time)

“Then, there will be one, two, three, four, five, six, seven years of no rain and bad crops. There will be no food to eat.”

(people hold up 7 thumbs down, one at a time)

“What should I do?” asked Pharoah.

(ask a question)

Joseph said, “During the one, two, three, four, five, six, seven good years, save up the extra grain and food.”

(people hold up the numbers in order on their fingers. Put hands back down.)

“When the one, two, three, four, five, six, seven bad years come, Egypt will have enough to eat, even when other countries run out.”

(people hold up the number in order on their fingers.)

Pharaoh said, “This is a good plan!”

(everyone thumbs up)

“Since God told you this plan, I am going to put you in charge of the whole thing. Here is a robe and a crown so that people will know you work for me and are in charge of everything.”

(take off hand cuffs and put on robe and crown.)

God helped Joseph know what to do for Egypt, and gave him the strength to do it. When bad times came, Egypt had enough to eat, and everyone loved Joseph.

(Yay!)

And that is the end of another part of God’s story.