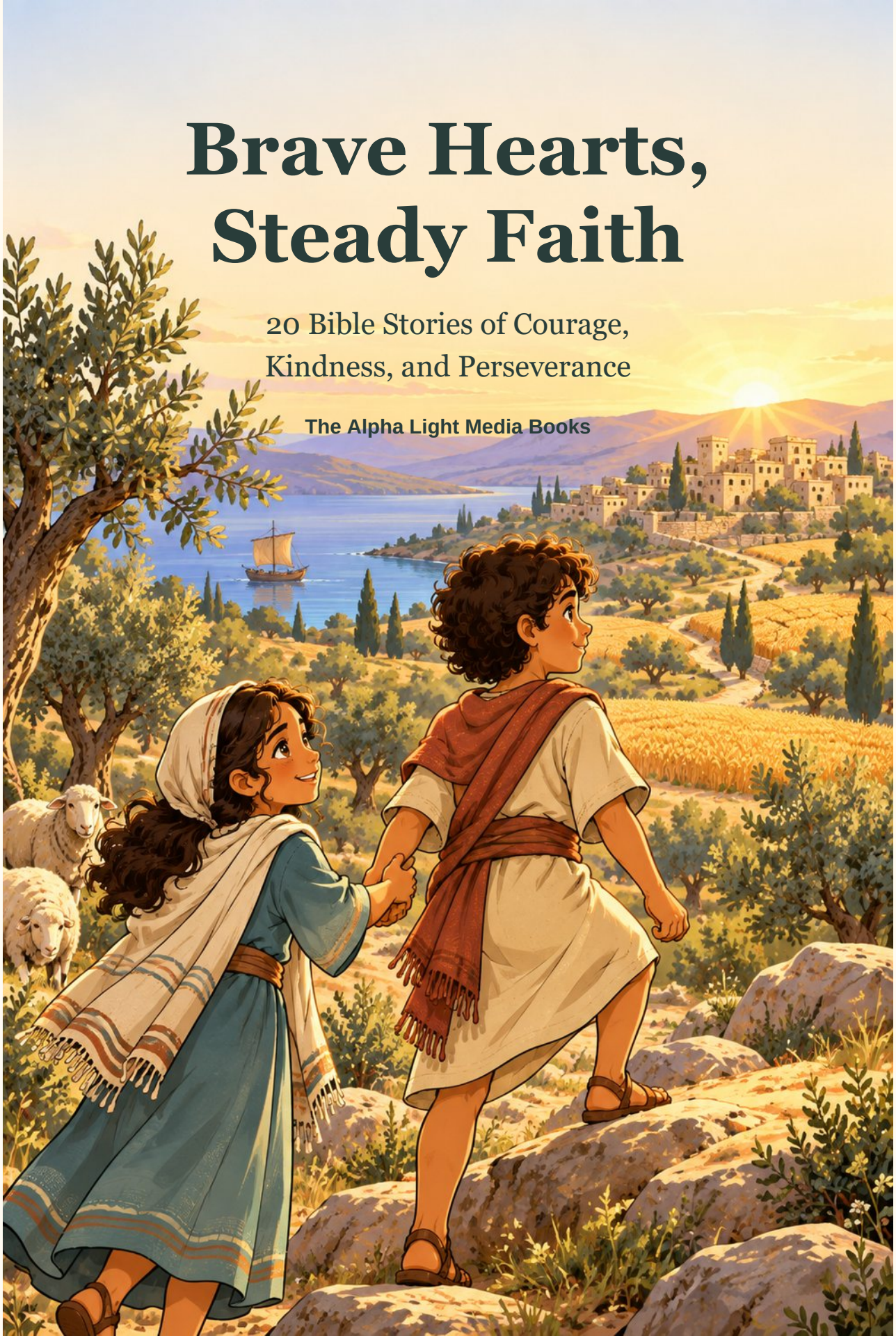
Brave Hearts, Steady Faith

20 Bible Stories of Courage, Kindness, and Perseverance

The Alpha Light Media Books



STORY 01

Joseph

God Was With Him



Genesis 37; 39-46; 50:15-21

The boy with the special coat



Long ago, in the land of Canaan, a boy named Joseph grew up among the sheep and shepherds of his father's household. He belonged to a large family, with older brothers who worked out in the fields and a younger brother named Benjamin. To anyone passing by, they might have seemed much like any other family. But there was trouble growing between them, and Joseph stood at the center of it.

Their father, Jacob, loved Joseph more openly than his other sons. When he gave Joseph a special coat, the gift made that favoritism plain for everyone to see. Joseph could wear his father's affection on his shoulders, while his brothers were left to wonder why they were treated differently. Before long, their jealousy had grown so bitter that they could scarcely speak a kind word to him.



Then Joseph had a dream.

He dreamed that he and his brothers were tying bundles of grain in a field. His bundle stood upright, while all the others gathered around and bowed down to it. When he told his brothers, they understood what the dream seemed to suggest.

Did he really expect to rule over them one day?

Joseph was only seventeen. Whatever lay ahead of him, he could not have known how far from home the road would take him.



Some time later, Jacob sent him to find his brothers and bring back news of them and their flocks. Joseph searched until he found them, unaware that they had seen him coming and were making plans of their own. Before he could return to his father, they seized him, stripped off his coat, and threw him into an empty pit.

Joseph begged them to listen. These were his brothers - the people who should have brought him safely home. But when a group of traders came along, they sold him and let the travelers take him away to Egypt.



Back at home, Jacob was shown Joseph's coat stained with an animal's blood. Believing that a wild beast had killed his son, he began to mourn.

Joseph was still alive, but he was being carried farther away with every step. His father could not come to help him, because his father believed there was no one left to find.

A new life, and another loss



The traders brought Joseph to Egypt, where he was sold to a man named Potiphar, an officer who served Pharaoh, Egypt's king. Joseph was now enslaved. He could not choose where to live or simply leave when he wished. The life he had known in Canaan was beyond his reach.

Yet the Bible tells us something about these years that Joseph's brothers could not see: God was with him.

In Potiphar's household, Joseph began doing the work placed before him. As time passed, Potiphar noticed that things went well under his care. He entrusted Joseph with more, until eventually Joseph was responsible for the household and everything his master owned. Far from home, he had become someone others depended on.

That trust made what happened next especially difficult.



Potiphar's wife wanted Joseph to become her lover, even though she was married to Potiphar. Joseph refused. His master had trusted him with so much; how could he betray that trust and do such a wrong thing before God?

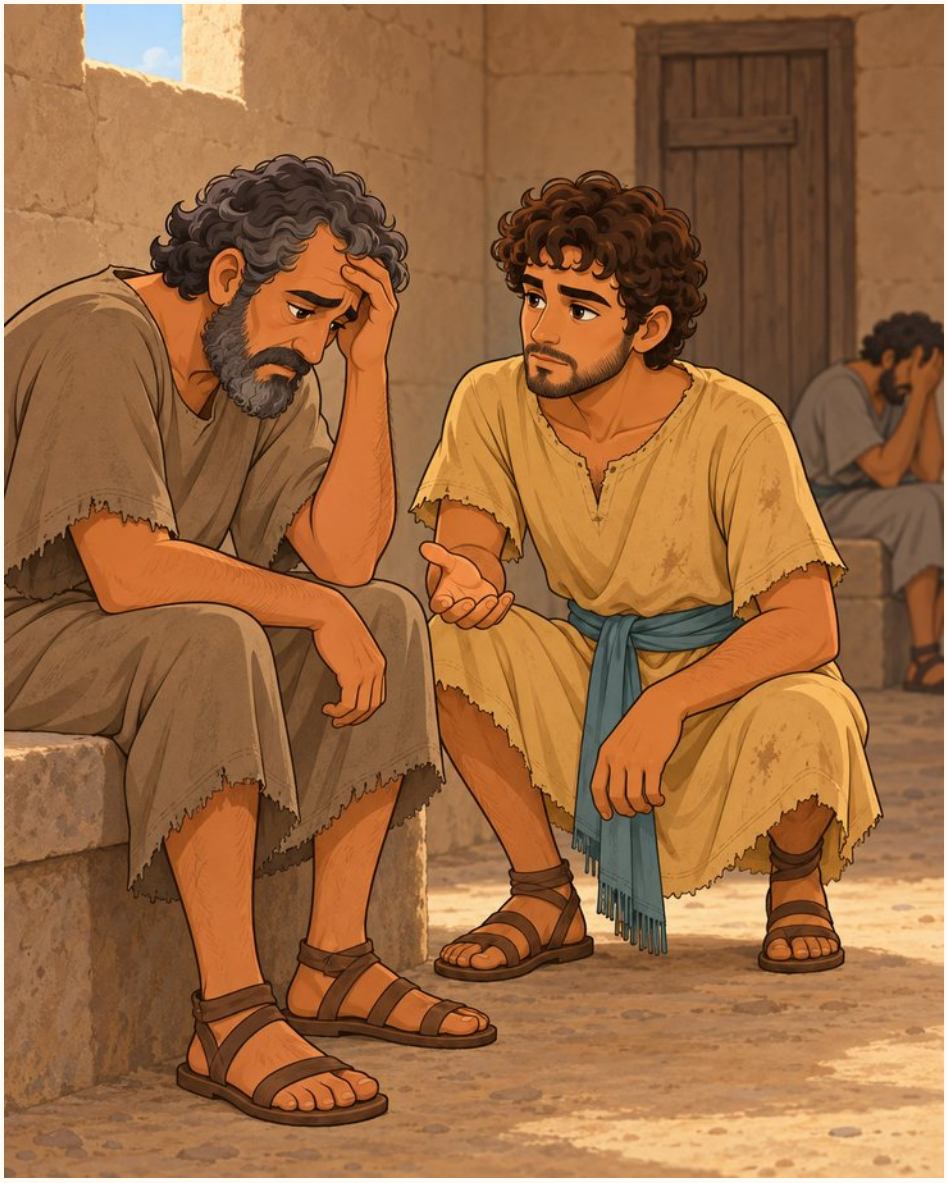
She kept trying to persuade him, but he would not agree. One day, when she caught hold of his robe, Joseph pulled away and ran, leaving the garment in her hands.

The robe became part of a lie. Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of trying to harm her, and when her husband heard her story, his anger turned against the young man he had trusted. Joseph was taken from the household and put in prison.

Once again, other people had decided his future. His brothers had taken his freedom; now a false accusation had taken away the position he had worked so hard to earn. This time, the loss had come after he had chosen to do what was right.

Prison was a bitter reward for his honesty. But the God who had been with Joseph in Potiphar's house had not stayed behind when the door closed on him.

The man who was forgotten



Life in prison brought new responsibilities. God showed Joseph kindness, and the prison keeper came to trust him with the care of the other prisoners. Joseph could not open the doors and leave, but within those walls there were still people who needed his help.

Among them were two men who had once served Pharaoh: his chief baker and his cupbearer, the officer who brought the king his wine. Both had offended Pharaoh and been sent into custody.

One morning, Joseph found them looking unusually troubled. Rather than passing them by, he asked what was wrong.

Each man had dreamed during the night, they explained, and neither knew what his dream meant. Joseph told them that the meaning of dreams belonged to God, then invited them to tell him what they had seen.

The cupbearer's dream held good news. In three days, Joseph explained, he would be released and restored to his place at Pharaoh's side. Here, at last, was someone who might be able to speak for Joseph in the palace.

“Remember me when things go well for you,” Joseph asked him. He explained that he had been taken from his own land and had done nothing to deserve being put in prison. If the cupbearer told Pharaoh about him, perhaps Joseph could finally go free.



Three days later, the cupbearer returned to the palace, just as Joseph had said. But once he was back in his familiar place, he forgot the prisoner who had helped him.

Joseph's request went unanswered. Two whole years passed before the cupbearer remembered it.

We are not told what Joseph thought on every one of those days. We do know that the story did not end with him waiting behind a prison door. Far beyond those walls, something was about to happen that would bring his name before the king.

An unexpected summons



One night, Pharaoh dreamed of seven healthy cows coming up out of the river. Seven thin, sickly cows followed them - and swallowed them. In another dream, seven thin heads of grain swallowed seven full, healthy ones. Both dreams troubled him, and when morning came, he summoned the wise men of Egypt to explain them.

None could give him an answer.

As the cupbearer heard what had happened, he remembered the young Hebrew prisoner who had explained his own dream. At last, he told Pharaoh about Joseph.



The order went out, and Joseph was hurried from the prison. He shaved, changed his clothes, and was brought before the king. After years of being unable to secure his own release, he now stood in the presence of the most powerful man in Egypt.

Pharaoh had heard that Joseph could interpret dreams, but Joseph did not claim the power for himself. It was God, he explained, who could give Pharaoh the answer he needed.

Both dreams carried the same warning. Egypt would have seven years of plentiful harvests, followed by seven years of famine - a time when there would not be enough food. The good years would be so completely swallowed by the hungry years that their plenty would seem to have disappeared.



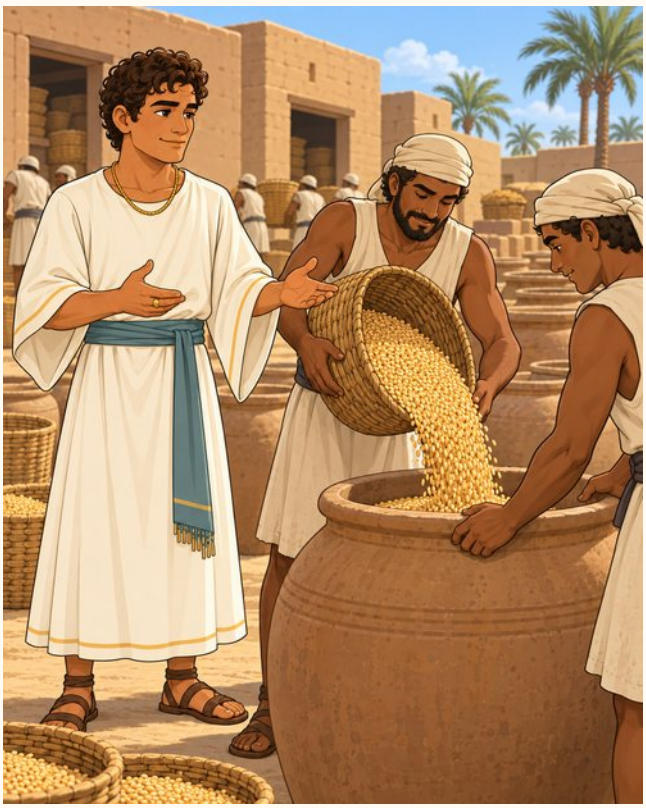
Joseph went further than explaining the danger. He offered Pharaoh a way to prepare.

During the good years, officials could collect and store part of the harvest. A wise leader should oversee the work, making sure that food was saved while there was enough to spare. When the famine came, those stores could keep people alive.

Pharaoh listened. Then he chose Joseph himself for the task.

The prisoner was given fine linen clothes, a gold chain, and the king's signet ring as a sign of his authority. Only Pharaoh would stand above him. At thirty years old, thirteen years after his brothers had sold him, Joseph became the man responsible for preparing Egypt for the hungry years ahead.

When the past returned



Joseph's new position brought an enormous amount of work. He traveled through Egypt, organizing the collection of grain and arranging for it to be stored in the cities. While the fields were producing more than people immediately needed, he kept preparing for the days when there would be less.

For seven years, the stores grew. Then the harvests failed, just as Pharaoh's dreams had warned.

As families began to run short of food, Joseph opened the storehouses. People could buy the grain that had been saved, and before long travelers were arriving from other countries as well. The famine had reached beyond Egypt, and hungry households everywhere were looking for somewhere to turn.



It had reached Canaan, too.

Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt and sent ten of his sons to buy some. He kept Benjamin at home, afraid that harm might come to him as it had to Joseph.

When the brothers arrived, they bowed before the governor whose permission they needed. To them, he was an important Egyptian official - a stranger with power over whether their families would eat.

Joseph knew them at once.

The brothers who had ignored his cries now stood before him asking for help. They did not recognize the man he had become, but he remembered them, and he remembered the dreams he had told them so many years before.

The choice before Joseph

Joseph did not immediately tell his brothers who he was. Their meetings were difficult. He spoke sharply, accused them of being spies, and held them in custody for a time. As he questioned them about their family, he learned that his father was still alive and that Benjamin had stayed at home.

His brothers did not realize that Joseph could understand their private conversation. When they spoke to one another about their trouble, they remembered the brother they had sold. They had heard him pleading, they admitted, and had refused to listen.

Hearing their regret, Joseph turned away to weep.



There were further journeys between Canaan and Egypt before the brothers finally returned with Benjamin. Then Joseph arranged a troubling test: his silver cup was hidden in Benjamin's grain sack, making the youngest brother appear to be a thief.

When the cup was discovered, Joseph said that Benjamin must remain as his servant. The others could return to their father.

Years earlier, the brothers had gone home after abandoning Joseph. Now they faced the prospect of leaving another brother behind.



Judah stepped forward and pleaded with the governor. He described how deeply their father loved Benjamin, and how another loss would break the old man's heart. Judah had promised to bring Benjamin home safely. Instead of allowing the youngest brother to stay, he offered to take his place.



Joseph could no longer hide what he was feeling. He sent the attendants away and began to cry so loudly that people outside could hear him.

“I am Joseph,” he told his brothers. “Is my father still alive?”

For a moment, they could not answer. The brother they had sold was standing before them. He knew what they had done, and now he had the power to make them pay for it.

But Joseph called them closer.

There were still years of famine ahead, he explained, and God had brought him to Egypt to preserve lives. They must go home, tell their father that Joseph was alive, and bring the family back. Joseph would make sure they had food.

Then he embraced Benjamin and wept. He kissed his brothers and cried with them, and at last they were able to talk together.

The family that had been torn apart by jealousy was being given a chance to begin again.

A place for his family



When Jacob first heard that Joseph was alive and ruling in Egypt, he could hardly take it in. For years, he had grieved over a son he believed was dead. Now his other sons were telling him that Joseph wanted him to come.

When he saw the wagons sent to carry the family, hope began to return. He set out for Egypt, determined to see Joseph again.



Joseph went to meet him in Goshen. When they finally came face to face, he threw his arms around his father and held him, weeping for a long time. There was no need to hurry past the moment. After all those years, they were together.



Joseph settled his family in Egypt and provided for them through the famine. Yet even after everything he had done for them, his brothers were not entirely free of their old fear. Years later, when Jacob died, they wondered whether Joseph had been waiting until their father was gone before taking revenge.

Joseph reassured them. They had intended to harm him, and he did not pretend otherwise. But God had brought good from what they had done, using Joseph's place in Egypt to save many lives. He would continue to provide for them and their children.

The brothers had once looked at Joseph's dreams and feared what would happen if he ever became powerful. Now they had their answer: he would use his power to keep them alive.

Joseph had not been able to choose every part of his journey. He had been carried away, falsely accused, imprisoned, and forgotten. Along the way, however, he had worked, refused wrongdoing, noticed other people's needs, asked for help, and prepared for a future others could not yet see.

God had been with him through it all. And when Joseph finally had the freedom to decide what happened next, he made room for mercy.

CARRY THE STORY WITH YOU

Talk together

1. Joseph did the right thing in Potiphar's house and still ended up in prison. What helps you keep choosing what is right when the result feels unfair?

2. Joseph asked the cupbearer for help and later offered Pharaoh a practical plan. What does his story show about the relationship between trusting God and taking action?

3. When Joseph's brothers needed food, he had power over them. What is the difference between becoming powerful and using power well?

A small step this week

Choose one useful responsibility you have been putting off. Decide when you will do it, what a good effort will look like, and whether you need help. At the end of the week, talk about what made it difficult and what helped you follow through.

Pray together

God, when life feels unfair, help us remain honest and willing to do good. Teach us to notice people who need us, to ask for help when we need it, and to act wisely with the opportunities you give us. When we have the power to hurt someone, help us choose mercy. Amen.

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