



# Joseph and his Brothers

Genesis 37:1-28

Welcome to 'Together Apart', free intergenerational resources to help us be church together while we are apart.

All the sections explore the same Bible passage in a range of creative ways. Choose whichever parts work best for you, and remember that 'All Age' does not mean 'only for the kiddies'!

You can find lots more free resources like this at [www.reflectionary.org](http://www.reflectionary.org)

Here is what you will find in each resource pack:



## A Word in Your Ear

A Bible passage that we can all learn from together, whatever our age.



## Food for Thought

Aimed at adults and teens, some thoughts and questions on the passage. Occasionally there might even be some Greek or Hebrew!



## Inner Space

A blank space for you to record your thoughts, whether that is worries, dreams or a shopping list.



## Looking Closer

A creative and interactive look at the Bible passage. Great for older children and anyone who likes a creative approach.



## I Wonder...

An imaginative style of Bible study, perfect for younger children and those who like to immerse themselves in the Bible world. Based on Lectio Divina and Godly Play wondering.



## Take a Break

A chill-out zone, with meditative colouring for adults and children, and links to audio recordings of the passage so that you can listen while resting your eyes.



## Creation Station

A craft for children (or young-at-heart adults!) to help us think about the passage. Glue sticks at the ready!



## High 5

Some creative prayer ideas for helping us to spend time with God. Five minutes, or as long as you want.



## A Word in Your Ear

Take your time reading this extract from our Bible passage. Ask God to help you hear. You can decorate the space around the words if you like.

### Genesis 37:23-28

When Joseph reached his brothers, they ripped off the fancy coat he was wearing, grabbed him, and threw him into a cistern.

The cistern was dry; there wasn't any water in it.

Then they sat down to eat their supper. Looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites on their way from Gilead, their camels loaded with spices, ointments, and perfumes to sell in Egypt.

Judah said, "Brothers, what are we going to get out of killing our brother and concealing the evidence?

Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, but let's not kill him—he is, after all, our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.

By that time the Midianite traders were passing by.

His brothers pulled Joseph out of the cistern and sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites who took Joseph with them down to Egypt.

(The Message)



## Food for Thought

Here we start on the turbulent tale of Joseph, which carries on through all the rest of Genesis. Here we see the first of many ups and downs of Joseph's life. He's the youngest of the grown-up sons, tending the flocks with some of his half-brothers, (notably the children of the servants). First he alienates these brothers by telling tales on them to their father, and then all the rest when he parades around in his posh new robes. Whether they are long sleeved, ornamented, Technicolor™ or otherwise, the point is clear: Joseph, the youngest, is set above his older brothers.

Hmmn, does that sound familiar at all? Jacob and Esau? Isaac and Ishmael? You'd have thought they've have spotted the pattern by now and realised that this causes all kind of problems. But, as ever, God pulls good out of bad.

**Q: Many times in the Bible we find someone who does not deserve the blessing getting it anyway. Which examples can you think of? How is this a picture of God's kingdom?**

Through the rest of the Bible, we mostly hear the names of the brothers as the tribes formed of their descendants - noble patriarchs, complete with long beards and expressions of saintly wisdom on their faces. But here they are hot-headed young men, prone to all the stupidity of angry mobs throughout the centuries. Even noble Reuben is not quite the selfless hero that we might think from verses 21 and 22 of this passage. Nip back a couple of chapters and look at verses 21 and 22 in chapter 35.

Yes, you read that right. Reuben had slept with his step-mother. Gob. Officially. Smacked. Not exactly a good start on the road to honoured leader of a nation, was it? Reuben could not afford to get any further into his father's bad books, and as the eldest son, he was in charge of his brothers. If anything went wrong (like, ooh, I dunno, the favourite son being 'accidentally' killed), then Reuben would be held responsible.

**Q: What do you think about Reuben's actions? Was this merely self-interest to get himself out of trouble, or was he genuine in his concern for Joseph?**

The other potential patriarchs were no better. Levi, destined to be the ancestor of the priesthood, is happily plotting murder! (Notable that his descendent, Moses, went the same way.) And Judah, ancestor of King David and Jesus, has his mind only on getting away with the crime. The Hebrew word he uses is more like 'loot' or 'swag', and his talk of covering up the blood reminds us of Cain, who killed his brother and tried to hide his crime from God.

All in all, a pretty rubbish set of role models. But it's good to know that God can use the most chipped and broken of pots to carry his blessing forward. Jesus' family tree has all sorts of people in it – foreigners, mis-fits, sinners by the bucketload. And God's kingdom is just the same. We're none of us perfect, but loved by a perfect God.

**Q: Who might we put on a pedestal today? How do we react when we discover that these plaster saints are human, and might have some less-than-perfect episodes in their past?**

**What is our attitude to the failings and dodgy incidents in our own pasts?**



## Inner Space

What's going round your head? Here is a space for you to put your thoughts on paper. You can write, draw ... whatever you like. What will you put here?



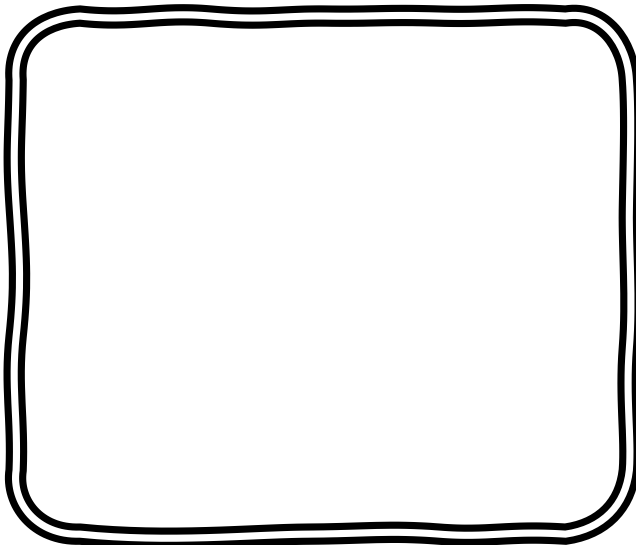
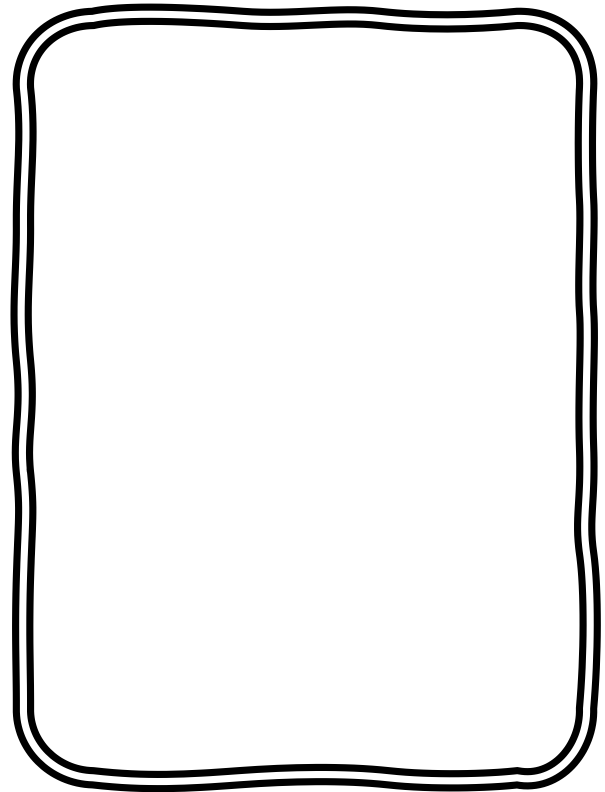
## Looking Closer

Ah, Joseph – we know about him. The dreamer with the fancy coat and a West-End musical

starring someone with nice teeth. But have you ever wondered what it was like being him? Let's start with the famous coat. This was more than just getting a nice jacket for your birthday.

Folks in those days didn't own many clothes. They might have one tunic to wear and one in the wash, plus a cloak for winter. Cloth was hard to make and expensive. Imagine that getting a t-shirt started with growing the cotton, then spinning it into thread and knitting it on tiny needles. How many t-shirts would you make?

**What would you wear if you had to make your clothes from scratch? What would getting a fancy robe mean to you?**



Joseph's family were farmers, same as everyone else. Imagine that eleven brothers turn up to work one day wearing jeans and sweatshirts and big welly boots, then Joseph arrives in a sharp suit with a white shirt, silk tie and gold cuff-links. Hmmn. Not exactly dressed for mucking out the pig sty, is he?

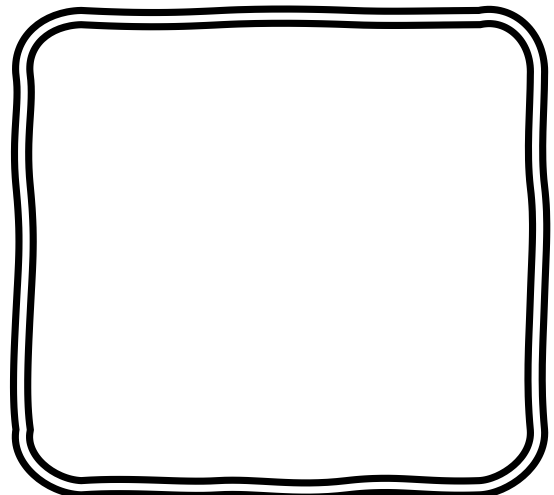
Jacob's gift to Joseph was not just a nice coat, it was a symbol that Joseph was not expected to do the dirty work anymore.

**What would you have thought if you had been one of the brothers?**

I guess you sometimes fall out with your brothers, sisters or friends. We all do, but I hope that you've never thrown them down an empty well, then sold them to passing merchants. (Tempting, sometimes!)

Reuben, the oldest of the brothers, tried to save Joseph. Although he was just as angry with Joseph as his brothers were, Reuben persuaded them not to kill Joseph, and planned to rescue him later.

**When you are angry with someone, how can you help yourself to not do things you will later regret?**





## I Wonder...

Read or listen to the passage a few times and let it sit in your mind.

Which words, phrases or ideas do you notice? Does anything stand out for you? Hold that in your heart and listen to what God might be saying.

**I wonder what part of the story you think is the most important.**

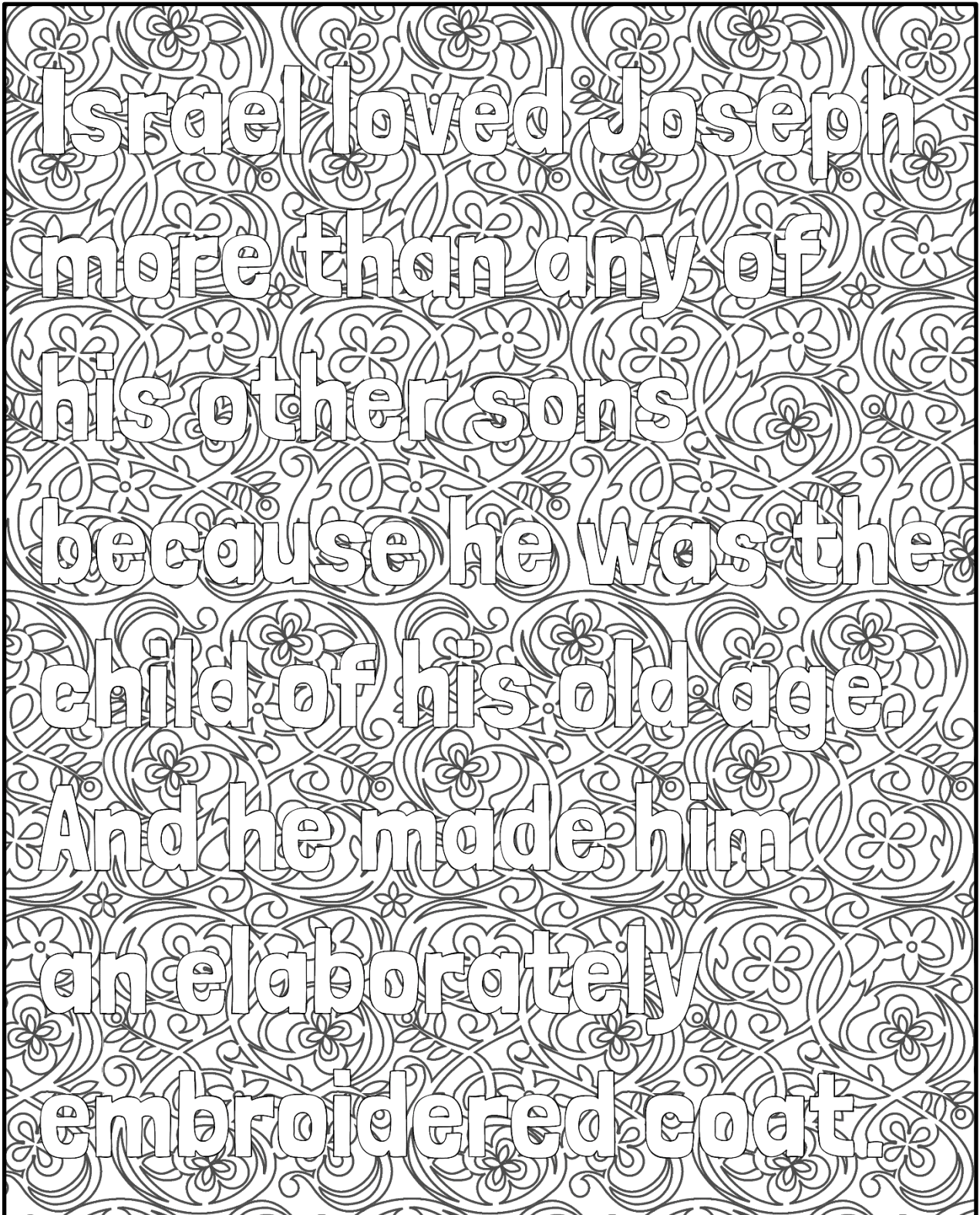
**I wonder where you are in this story.**



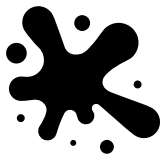
## Take a Break

Put on some music, or listen to the passage being read out while you simply sit and be. You can colour the picture below, or fill it with zentangles, or you can just spend the time breathing.

Genesis 37 on Bible Gateway audio [ESV](#) – [Message](#) – [NIV \(Dramatised\)](#) – [NIV \(Suchet\)](#)







## Creation Station – Dress Up Joseph

Make your own dress-up Joseph and tell the story!

### You will need:

For Joseph

- Print out of the template on the next page
- Scissors
- Colouring pens

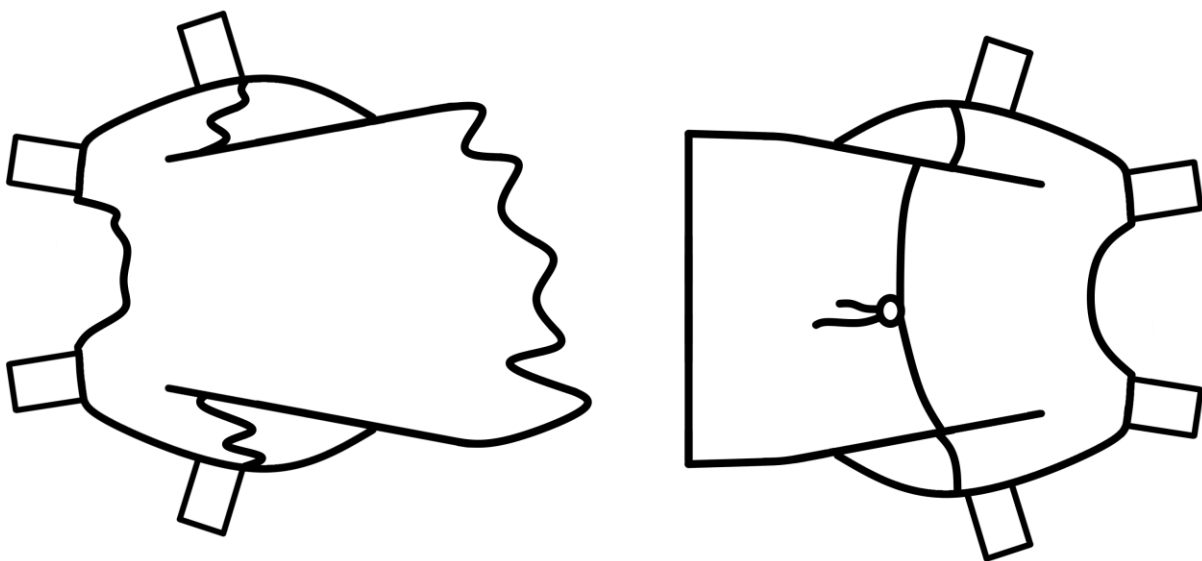
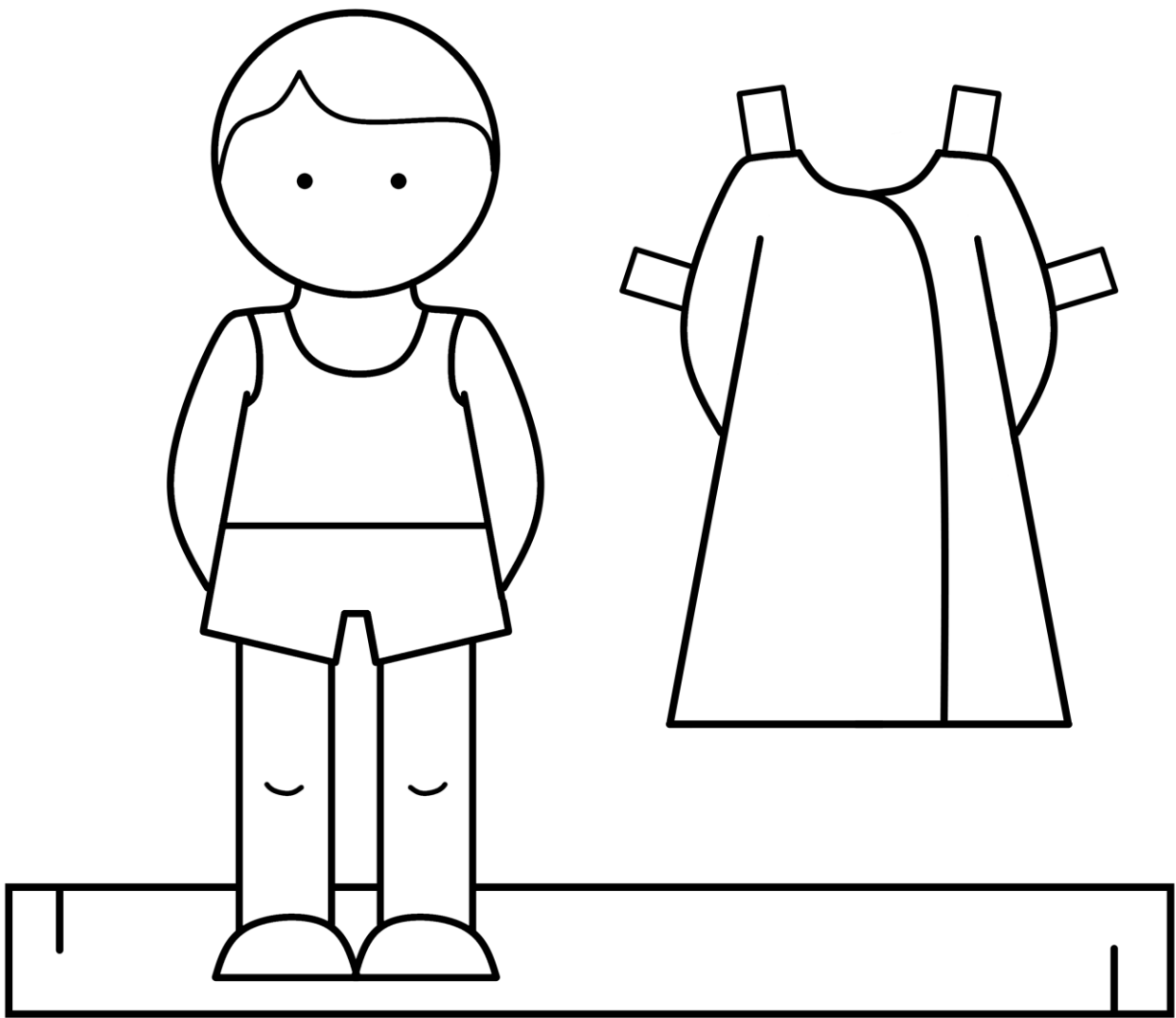
For the well

- Empty Pringles tube or piece of brown/grey card bent into a tube shape
- Paints
- String
- Sticky tape

### What to Do

1. Cut out the figure of Joseph on the sheet, including the long strip at his feet, and colour him in.
2. Carefully make the two small snips in the long strip, one at the top and one at the bottom. Each snip should go half-way through the strip.
3. Bend the strip around at the back into a circle and slot the ends together (put the ends of the strip inside the circle). This will make a stand for Joseph.
4. Next cut out the short tunic for Joseph. (Be careful to keep the four tabs on the shoulders and arms.) This is Joseph's normal day wear for the farm, so it would be fairly plain, and maybe a little grubby. You can colour it in, then use the four tabs to hang it on your Joseph figure.
5. Now cut out and colour the long, fancy robe. You can make this as colourful as you like. You could use metallic markers or add stickers, beads, or even glitter!
6. The last costume is the raggy tunic. This is for when Joseph was sold as a slave. It might be torn and dirty. Maybe it has a patch on it.
7. To make the well (sometimes called a *cistern*), paint the tube grey or brown and add some grass around the top. Make sure it is wide enough to fit your Joseph figure inside.
8. Stick a length of string on the back of your Joseph figure, then you can post him down the well and use the string to pull him out again.
9. Have lots of fun telling the story!







## High 5

Spend five minutes talking and listening with God. Here is one way:

### Joseph's Clothes

Joseph wore many different types of clothes in his story. We can use these to help us pray. If you want to follow these prayers using the dress-up Joseph, use the templates to make another set of long robes in white and gold for when Joseph was a ruler of Egypt.

#### Work clothes

We pray for people at work. These might be doctors, nurses and scientist who help people with coronavirus. We can thank God for for teachers, shop workers, factory workers and the emergency services (police, fire, ambulance and lifeboats). Who else can you think of?

Dear God,

.....  
..... Amen.

#### Fancy clothes

We pray for people we care about. These could be our family and our friends, or people that we hear about in the news who need help. Who else can you think of?

Dear God,

.....  
..... Amen.

#### Raggy clothes

We pray for people who do not have safe places to live, or who do not have good food to eat. Pray for those who live in countries where there is fighting. Pray for people who are treated unfairly because of the colour of their skin. Who else can you think of?

Dear God,

.....  
..... Amen.

#### Ruler's clothes

We pray for people who decide the laws. Pray for the leaders of your country and other countries. Ask God to help them make wise and fair decisions that help people and make the world a better place. Who else can you think of?

Dear God,

.....  
..... Amen.