

To Forgive or Not to Forgive?

Ever make a mistake? I've made a so many in my lifetime. Today I want to talk about the kinds of mistakes we make when we are doing paperwork, like in school, on a test, or when you make a mistake writing a letter or drawing a picture. If you suddenly think of the answer to a question after you've already written in an answer, what can you do about it? You can erase it or rub it out.

When I was in school I didn't always have an eraser, so I would wet my finger and rub the paper. It made a terrible mess! Aren't you glad that someone invented erasers? I know I am. Erasers make it possible for us to start over and correct our mistakes.

But what about other people's mistakes? When was the last time you had to forgive someone for doing something bad towards you? Did you forgive them? Is it always easy to forgive other people? No it's not. When was the last time someone had to forgive you for something? Did they forgive you?

Forgiveness to others isn't always easy. Sometimes you want to stay mad and never talk to that person ever again. It's OK to never talk to them again, you don't have to be friends with everyone. But you do need to forgive them. Why? Because God forgives us. God forgives us when we confess our sins and failures, and He makes things clean and new in our lives. In fact, the Bible says He blots out our sins. He remembers them no more because the Blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sins. God wants us to forgive others the way he forgives us. He doesn't want us to live a life of anger and hatred. He wants us to be good and loving and the way to do that is to forgive others, even when it's not so easy.

In today's lesson we are going to read about the story of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's brothers made many mistakes and did bad things to him. But with God's love, Joseph was able to use the power of forgiveness!

Four hundred years before God's people were slaves in Egypt, there lived a man named Jacob who had 12 sons. One son, Joseph, was Jacob's FAVORITE son. This made the other brothers jealous!

Joseph also had some dreams when he was young. These dreams seemed to say that his family would one day bow down to him. Well, when he told his family his dreams, his brothers became even more jealous!

And if that weren't enough, Jacob made a special coat for Joseph. The special coat showed everyone that Joseph was Jacob's favorite son. Were his brothers ever jealous!

One day, Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers who were taking care of the family's animals far away from home. When the brothers saw Joseph coming, they decided to take his coat from him and throw him into a nearby pit.

Soon the brothers sold Joseph to some traders (people who buy and sell things) who were on their way to Egypt.

Joseph's brothers told their father that Joseph was dead. But really, Joseph was now a SLAVE in Egypt. Despite being a slave, Joseph trusted God and did his best. Soon he became his Egyptian owner's most trusted servant.

The wife of the man who owned Joseph lied about Joseph. She got Joseph put into JAIL! But once again, Joseph trusted God. He did his best and helped other prisoners. Soon he was put in charge of the jail! He even helped two prisoners by telling them the meaning of dreams they had.

Some time later, Pharaoh, the ruler of all Egypt, had a STRANGE dream. No one could tell him what it meant! But one of the men Joseph had helped in jail told Pharaoh about Joseph. So Pharaoh called for Joseph. Soon Joseph was standing in front of Pharaoh! He told Pharaoh that his dream meant there was going to be a famine—years when there wouldn't be any rain and very little food.

Pharaoh thought about what Joseph had told him. He realized that Joseph was a VERY wise man. So he made Joseph second ruler of the whole country of Egypt! He gave Joseph his ring, so Joseph could make laws. He gave Joseph a royal necklace to wear around his neck, so people would know Joseph was a ruler. Joseph had big barns built to store food to eat during the famine. He was in charge of everybody except Pharaoh!

After seven years, the famine DID come, as Joseph had said it would. There was also a famine back where Jacob and all of Joseph's brothers lived. Soon the brothers came to Egypt in search of food. But they didn't recognize Joseph. They bowed low before Joseph, as he had seen in his dream. They BEGGED Joseph to sell them food!

Joseph didn't tell them who he was just yet. But he gave them lots of grain and sent them home. He also kept one brother with him, just to be sure they would come back! Joseph's brothers DID come back. Finally, Joseph told them who he was! His brothers were afraid. Would Joseph punish us? they wondered. Joseph did not. Instead, he FORGAVE them!

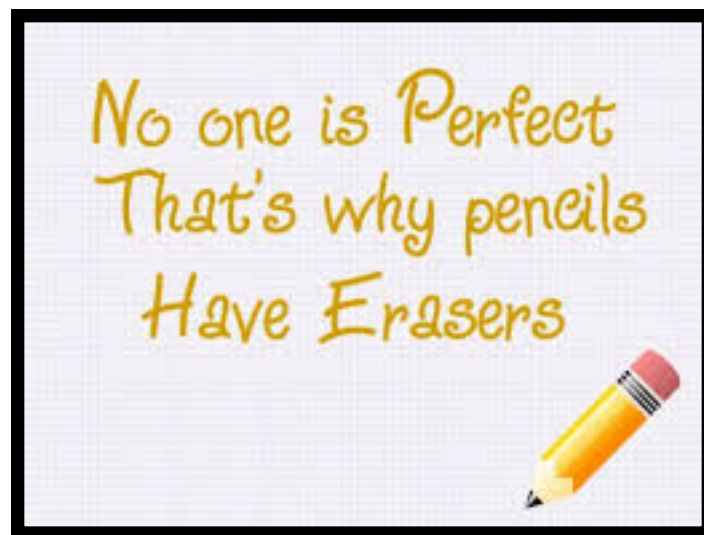
He loved his brothers, even though they had been so cruel to him. He told them that even though they had meant to hurt him, God had used it for good! Joseph invited them all to come and live in Egypt, where there was plenty of food for all their families! Joseph showed God's love to his family, no matter what!

Joseph could have remained angry and bitter at his brothers for what they had done to him. He could have had them thrown in prison or worse, killed. But instead, he chose to forgive them because he knew that God had used their sin for good. Joseph remembered that God was in charge! In this story we saw Joseph showing grace to his family. They deserved punishment for their sin, but instead Joseph showed them mercy.

Just like Joseph's brothers we deserve to be punished for our sins, but God doesn't treat us the way we deserve. He sent His Son Jesus to take the punishment for us, so we can be fully forgiven! Now, when God looks at us He doesn't see our sin and failure, but the perfect obedience of Jesus.

To forgive someone means to feel love and kindness for others, even though they have done something that hurt us or made us angry. Sometimes it means we have to change our angry feelings toward that person into feelings of kindness. When we forgive others, we do not want to hurt them or get back at them. We are kind to them, even if they are not kind to us.

Remember, though an eraser may leave a bit of a smudge behind, the cleansing which God applies to our sins leaves us wholly clean and makes us just like new again. Don't let your life be a series of smudges or ripped up papers, show God's love to others through forgiveness and mercy.



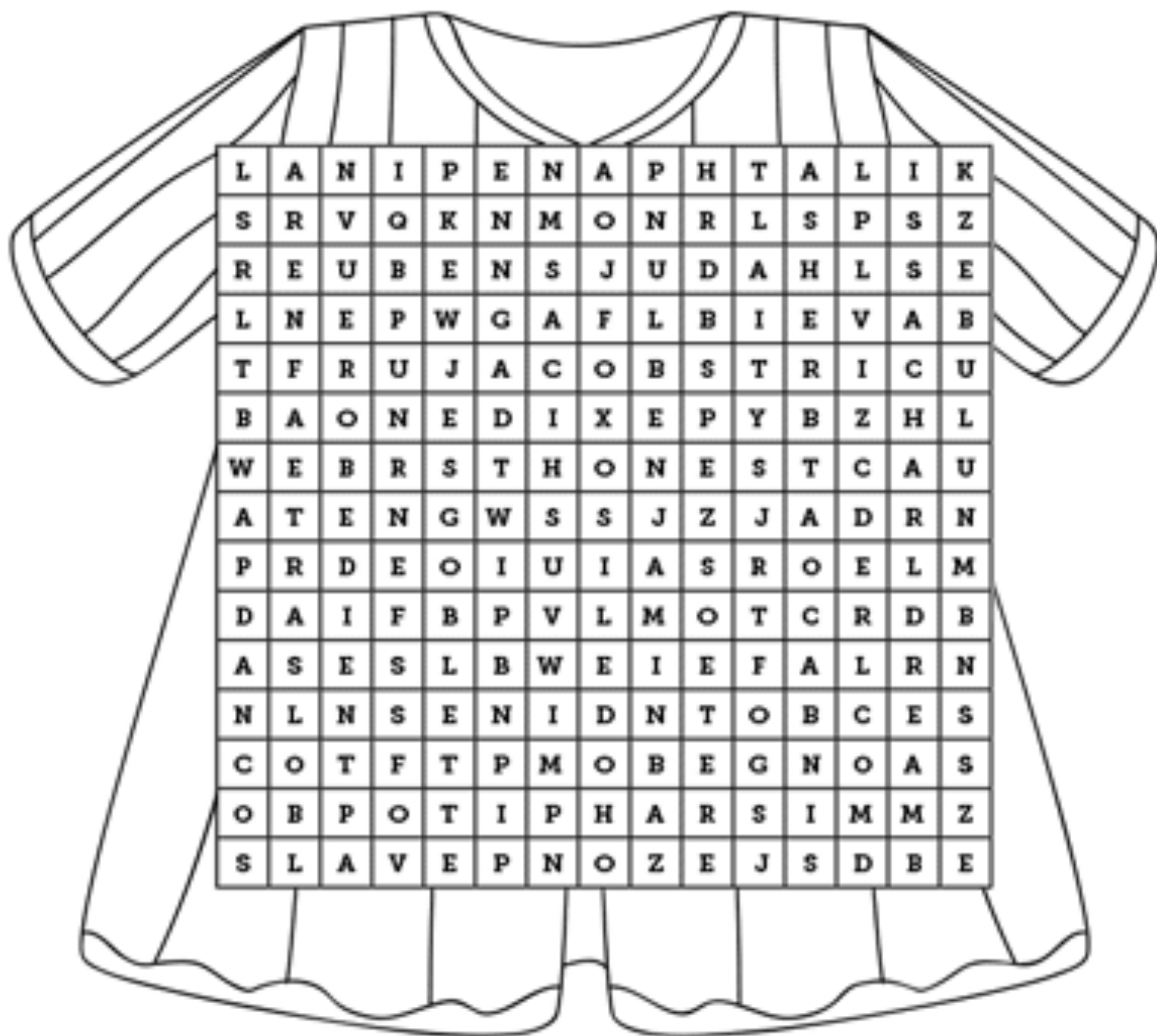
JOSEPH

and his coat of many colors



Joseph Word Search

Search for the given words below hidden in the squares.

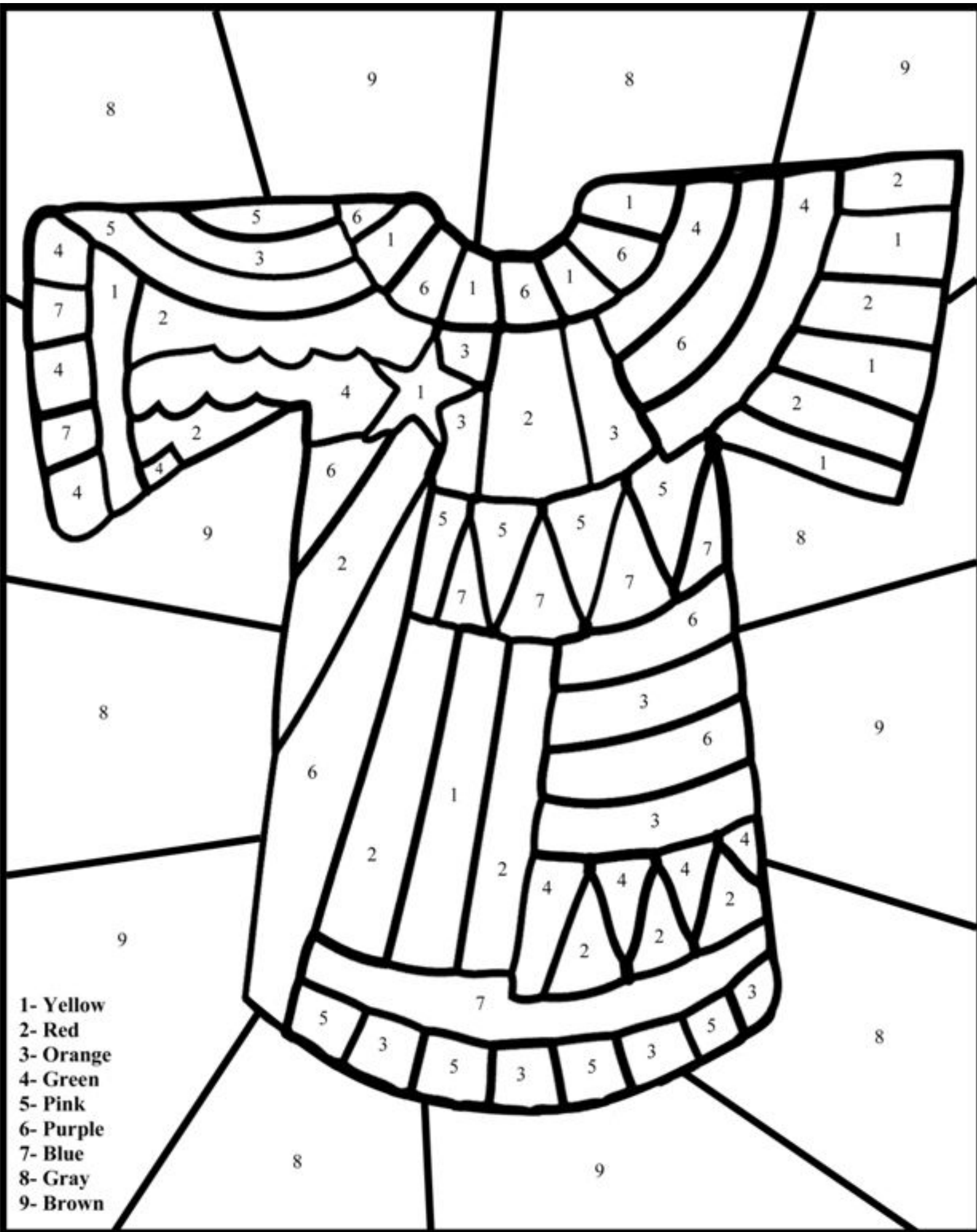


FORGIVENESS
 BENJAMIN
 GOBLET
 SLAVE
 NAPHTALI

OBEDIENT
 JACOB
 HONEST
 ZEBULUN
 ASHER

JUDAH
 SIMEON
 LEVI
 COAT
 ISSACHAR

GAD
 REUBEN
 DREAM
 DAN
 POTIPHAR



- 1- Yellow
- 2- Red
- 3- Orange
- 4- Green
- 5- Pink
- 6- Purple
- 7- Blue
- 8- Gray
- 9- Brown

Joseph said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt." What else did Joseph say?

Use the calculator code to find out. Each number stands for more than one letter, so work to find which letter works.



"Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves for selling me here,

b 2 1 a 7 s 2 3 7 8 1 7

7 5 s 1 8 2 4 3 v 2 7

7 h 1 7 3 5 2 7 2 n 7

5 2 1 h 2 1 d 5 2

9 5 7 ."

