Preschool–Grade 6

Joseph and Potiphar

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Joseph said no to sin because he would not sin against God, and the LORD was with him in good times and hard times. God is with us, and He helps us say no to sin.
Bible passage: Genesis 39:1–23. Read it before class, and read the teacher note at the end of this lesson.
Memory verse: "There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" *Genesis 39:9 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Kids look up only the verses marked **Look up** below.

1. Opening game: Trusted or Not? (5–10 minutes)

Read short sentences out loud. Kids stand up if the person can be trusted and sit down if not. 1) "She feeds her neighbor's cat every day while they are away." 2) "He said he would clean his room, but he played instead." 3) "She found a dollar on the floor at church and gave it to the pastor." 4) "His friends told him to take candy from the store, and he said no." Ask: *What makes someone easy to trust?* Say: "Today we will meet a young man who was trusted with everything, and who said no to sin even when it cost him."

2. Bible story: The LORD Was with Joseph (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Genesis 39. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Sold into Egypt. Joseph's brothers sold him, and he was brought down to Egypt by the **Ishmeelites**, traders who bought and sold goods (Genesis 37:28; 39:1). **Look up Genesis 39:1.** Potiphar was an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

In Potiphar's house. Look up Genesis 39:2. Prosperous means things went well for him. Potiphar saw that the LORD was with Joseph and made all that he did to **prosper** (39:3). Joseph found **grace** (favor) in his sight, and Potiphar made him **overseer**, the one in charge, over his house, and put all that he had into Joseph's hand (39:4). **Look up Genesis 39:5.** God blessed even Potiphar's field because of Joseph. Potiphar trusted Joseph so much that he didn't keep track of anything but the bread he ate (39:6).

Joseph says no. Potiphar's wife asked Joseph, day by day, to do something wrong (39:10). Joseph **refused** (said no). He said his master had trusted him with everything in the house (39:8). **Look up Genesis 39:9. Wickedness** means great evil. Joseph knew that doing wrong would be sin against his master and, most of all, sin against God. Day after day, he **hearkened not** (would not listen) (39:10).

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Blamed and put in prison. Potiphar's wife blamed Joseph for something he did not do. When Potiphar heard her words, "his **wrath** was **kindled**," which means he became very angry (39:19). **Look up Genesis 39:20.** Joseph had done right, and he was put in prison anyway.

God was still with Joseph. Look up Genesis 39:21. Shewed means showed; **mercy** means kindness Joseph didn't earn; **favour** means the keeper liked him and trusted him. The keeper of the prison **committed** (gave) all the prisoners into Joseph's hand (39:22). **Look up Genesis 39:23.** Later, God brought Joseph out of the prison and Pharaoh set him over all the land of Egypt (Genesis 41:14, 41:41).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Joseph said doing wrong would be "sin against God" (39:9). Why do you think he thought about God first?
2. Joseph was asked "day by day" (39:10). Why is it hard when someone keeps asking you to do something wrong? What helps you keep saying no?
3. Joseph did right and still ended up in prison (39:20). Does doing right always make life easy right away? What did God do for Joseph (39:21–23)?
4. "The LORD was with Joseph" shows up in 39:2, 39:21 and 39:23. Where do you need to remember that God is with you this week?
5. Psalm 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." How can learning verses help us say no to sin?

Recall questions

1. What was Potiphar's job? *(An officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, Genesis 39:1)*
2. What did Potiphar make Joseph? *(Overseer over his house, 39:4)*
3. What did the keeper of the prison put into Joseph's hand? *(All the prisoners, 39:22)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain: Potiphar trusted Joseph with everything except his wife, because she was Potiphar's wife. **None greater** means no one more important; **kept back** means held back; **thee** means you; **wickedness** means great evil. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Joseph said no to sin because he would not sin against God. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: if someone asks you to do something wrong, say Joseph's words in your heart: "How can I sin against God?" Then say no.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Genesis 39:1: What was Potiphar? *(An officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian)*
2. Genesis 39:2: What kind of man was Joseph? *(A prosperous man)*
3. Genesis 39:4: What did Potiphar make Joseph? *(Overseer over his house)*
4. Genesis 39:5: Where was the blessing of the LORD? *(Upon all that he had in the house, and in the field)*
5. Genesis 39:9: Who did Joseph say he would sin against? *(God)*
6. Genesis 39:20: Whose prisoners were kept in the prison? *(The king's prisoners)*
7. Genesis 39:21: What did the LORD show Joseph? *(Mercy)*
8. Genesis 39:23: What did the LORD make to prosper? *(That which Joseph did)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for being with Joseph in the house and in the prison. Help us hide Your Word in our hearts, so we can say no to sin. Thank You that You are with us in good times and hard times. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: what this lesson leaves out. Genesis 39:7–18 tells what Potiphar's wife wanted and how she blamed Joseph. This lesson says only that she asked him day by day to do wrong, that Joseph said no (39:9–10), and that she blamed him for something he did not do. Kids look up only the verses marked in the story. If a child reads ahead or asks, say simply: "She wanted Joseph to do something that was wrong in God's eyes, and Joseph would not."

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