Preschool–Grade 6

Joseph and Potiphar

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Say no to sin, because sin is against God. Joseph stayed faithful when no one was watching and when doing right cost him, and the LORD was with him.
Bible passage: Genesis 39:1–6 and 39:19–23, read out loud by students; Genesis 39:8–10 told by the teacher.
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)* and "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." *1 Corinthians 10:13 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read all of Genesis 39 and the teacher note at the end. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: How Would You Say No? (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. Students call out a short, kind, clear way to say no. 1) "A friend asks you to copy your test answers." 2) "Someone in your group chat wants you to share a mean joke about a classmate." 3) "A friend keeps asking you, every day, to take something from a store without paying." Ask: *Which is harder: saying no once, or saying no every day? Why?* Say: "Joseph had to say no day after day, and doing right cost him. Let's see what kept him strong."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Genesis 39:1–6. Old words:

- **Ishmeelites** (39:1): traders who bought and sold goods; Joseph's brothers had sold him to them (37:28)
- **prosperous… to prosper** (39:2–3): successful, going well; **found grace in his sight** (39:4): Potiphar was pleased with him
- **overseer** (39:4): the manager of the whole household; **for Joseph's sake** (39:5): because of Joseph
- **he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat** (39:6): Potiphar didn't keep track of anything but his own meals

Tell 39:8–10 in your own words: Potiphar's wife asked Joseph, day by day, to do wrong. Joseph **refused**. He said his master had trusted him with everything in the house except her, "because thou art his wife."
Read 39:9 out loud together. Day after day, Joseph **hearkened not**: he would not listen (39:10).

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Then tell the next part in one sentence: she blamed Joseph for something he had not done, and when Potiphar heard her words, "his wrath was kindled."
Read out loud: Genesis 39:19–23. Old words:

- **his wrath was kindled** (39:19): he became very angry
- **the king's prisoners were bound** (39:20): Pharaoh's own prisoners were kept there
- **shewed him mercy... favour** (39:21): showed him kindness he didn't earn; the keeper trusted him
- **committed to Joseph's hand** (39:22): put in Joseph's care; **he was the doer of it**: Joseph ran it all
- **looked not to any thing** (39:23): didn't need to check on anything Joseph did

Tell the end in your own words: years later, God brought Joseph out of prison, and Pharaoh set him over all the land of Egypt (Genesis 41:14, 41:41). Joseph later told his brothers, "ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Genesis 50:20).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Joseph called the wrong thing "sin against God" (39:9), not just a wrong against Potiphar. How does it change a choice when you see it as being about God?
2. Joseph was asked "day by day" (39:10). Temptation often doesn't come once. What helps you keep saying no when it keeps coming?
3. Potiphar trusted Joseph with everything (39:6). What things has God or your parents trusted you with? What does faithfulness look like when no one is checking?
4. Joseph did right and still went to prison (39:20). Is it worth doing right even when it costs you? What does 39:21–23 show about God?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What does it promise about every temptation? What "way to escape" can you plan ahead of time?
6. "The LORD was with Joseph" is said in the good place (39:2) and the hard place (39:21). Where do you need to know that this week?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in Genesis 39:9 and 1 Corinthians 10:13: **none greater** means no one more important; **kept back** means held back; **thee** means you; **wickedness** means great evil; **suffer** means allow; **bear it** means stand strong through it.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Genesis 39:9 this week; keep working on 1 Corinthians 10:13 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Joseph said, 'how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' (Genesis 39:9, KJV). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where is it hardest for me to say no to wrong things?
2. What is my "way to escape" (1 Corinthians 10:13) the next time? Write what I will say or do.
3. Write a short prayer asking God to help you stay faithful, like Joseph.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: write "how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9) on a card and keep it where you will see it every day.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, You were with Joseph in Potiphar's house and in the prison. Help us see every choice as a choice about You, keep saying no to sin, and stay faithful when no one is watching. Thank You for the way to escape You promise, and for saving us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: what this lesson leaves out. Genesis 39:7 and 39:10–18 tell 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 (39:8–10), and that she blamed him for something he had not done; 39:7 and 39:11–18 are not read in class. If a student asks, say simply: "She wanted Joseph to do something that was wrong in God's eyes, and he would not." Keep the focus on Joseph's faithfulness and God's mercy.

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