Preschool–Grade 6

Joseph Forgives His Brothers

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

Main point: Joseph forgave his brothers because he saw God's hand in what happened, and God wants us to forgive others as He has forgiven us.
Bible passage: Genesis 45:1–15. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." *Genesis 45:5 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Pay Back or Forgive? (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. Kids stand up if they think it would be easy to forgive, and stay seated if it would be hard. 1) Your friend forgets to save you a seat. 2) Your brother breaks your favorite toy on purpose. 3) A classmate tells a lie about you. 4) Someone who was mean to you for a long time says, "I'm sorry." Ask: *Why is it harder to forgive some things? What do people usually want to do when someone hurts them?* Say: "Today we'll meet a man who had the power to pay his brothers back for something terrible, and see what he did."

2. Bible story: God Did Send Me (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Genesis 45. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Before the story. Joseph's brethren (brothers) hated him and could not speak peaceably to him (Genesis 37:4). They cast him into a pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver, and he was brought into Egypt (37:24, 37:28). But the LORD was with Joseph (39:2), and Pharaoh set him over all the land of Egypt (41:41). When the famine came, Joseph's ten brethren came to buy corn (42:3). They bowed down before him, but they knew not him (42:6, 42:8). The second time, they brought their youngest brother, Benjamin (43:15).

Joseph makes himself known. Look up Genesis 45:1. Joseph could not **refrain himself**, hold in his feelings, any longer. He sent every man out, so no one else was with him. He wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard (45:2). **Look up Genesis 45:3.** His brothers could not answer; they were **troubled at his presence**, scared to be standing in front of him.

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Come near. Look up Genesis 45:4. Joseph said, "Come near to me, I pray you," and they came near. He said plainly what they had done: "whom ye sold into Egypt." **Look up Genesis 45:5.** Joseph told them not to be **grieved** (very sad) or angry with themselves, because God sent him ahead to **preserve** (keep alive) life. There had been two years of famine, and there would be five more years with no **earing** (plowing) or harvest (45:6). God sent Joseph to save their lives by a great **deliverance**, a great rescue (45:7). **Look up Genesis 45:8.** "It was not you that sent me hither, but God."

Go and get my father. Joseph told them to **haste** (hurry) to their father with this message: God had made Joseph lord of all Egypt; come down, **tarry not** (don't wait) (45:9). They would dwell in the land of **Goshen**, near Joseph, with their children, grandchildren, flocks and herds, and he would **nourish** them, feed and care for them, through the five years of famine (45:10–11). Their own eyes could see it was really Joseph speaking (45:12).

Weeping together. Look up Genesis 45:14. Joseph fell upon Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. **Look up Genesis 45:15.** He kissed all his brethren and wept upon them, "and after that his brethren talked with him."

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

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

1. Joseph was a ruler. He could have paid his brothers back. Why do you think he said, "Come near to me" instead (Genesis 45:4)?
2. Joseph still said, "whom ye sold into Egypt" (45:4). Does forgiving mean pretending nothing wrong happened? What does it mean?
3. Joseph said, "it was not you that sent me hither, but God" (45:8). How can God bring good out of something bad?
4. The brothers were scared and could not answer (45:3). How do you feel when you know you hurt someone? What helps?
5. Who is someone you need to forgive this week?

Recall questions

1. How many more years of famine were coming? *(Five, Genesis 45:6, 45:11)*
2. What land would Joseph's family live in? *(Goshen, 45:10)*
3. Which brother wept on Joseph's neck? *(Benjamin, 45:14)*

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

Explain the old words: **therefore** means so, **grieved** means very sad, **ye** means you, **hither** means here, and **preserve life** means keep people alive. 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's brothers deserved to be paid back, but Joseph forgave them. God forgives us like that. 'And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' (Ephesians 4:32, KJV) 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: forgive someone who hurt you. Don't pay them back; pray for them and be kind to them.

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 45:1: What did Joseph cry out? *("Cause every man to go out from me")*
2. Genesis 45:2: Who heard Joseph weep? *(The Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh)*
3. Genesis 45:3: What did Joseph ask about his father? *("Doth my father yet live?")*
4. Genesis 45:4: What did Joseph ask his brothers to do? *("Come near to me")*
5. Genesis 45:6: How many years had the famine been in the land? *(Two)*
6. Genesis 45:8: What three things had God made Joseph? *(A father to Pharaoh, lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt)*
7. Genesis 45:10: Name two things the family would bring to Goshen. *(Any two: children, children's children, flocks, herds, all that thou hast)*
8. Genesis 45:15: What did the brothers do after Joseph kissed them? *(They talked with him)*

Or choose the **Joseph forgives his brothers word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/joseph-forgives-his-brothers-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/joseph-forgives-his-brothers-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/joseph-forgives-his-brothers-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/joseph-forgives-his-brothers-worksheet).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for forgiving us. Help us forgive the people who hurt us, and help us trust that You can bring good out of hard things, like You did for Joseph. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child says someone has hurt them: listen kindly. Forgiving does not mean what happened was okay, and it never means keeping a secret or staying where you can be hurt. Joseph still named the wrong (Genesis 45:4). Encourage the child to tell a parent or another adult they trust, and follow your church's child safety policy.

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