Preschool–Grade 6

Joseph Forgives His Brothers

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Joseph forgave his brothers, and God wants us to forgive others too.
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, 5 index cards, a marker, paper and crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 5 cards and hide them around the room (see part 4). Put a bookmark in your Bible at Genesis 45.

1. Opening game: Come Near to Me (5 minutes)

Kids stand in a line across the room from you. When you say, "Come near to me!" they take one giant step toward you. When you say, "Go out!" they take one small step back. Mix them up until everyone reaches you. Then say: "Today we will hear a true story about a man who said to his brothers, 'Come near to me,' even though they had been very mean to him."

2. Bible story: I Am Joseph (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Genesis 45, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

Long before this story, Joseph's big brothers hated him (Genesis 37:4). They sold him, and he was taken far away to Egypt (37:28; 45:4). But the LORD was with Joseph (39:2). Years later, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, set Joseph over all the land of Egypt (41:41). Then a **famine** came. That means no food grew, and people were hungry (41:54). Joseph's ten brothers came to Egypt to buy **corn**, which means grain for bread (42:3). They bowed down to Joseph, but they did not know who he was (42:6, 42:8). Later they came again, and brought their youngest brother, **Benjamin** (43:15).

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The story continues: Joseph **could not refrain himself**. That means he could not hold in his feelings any longer. He cried, "Cause every man to go out from me!" Everyone else left the room, so it was only Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 45:1). Joseph **wept** aloud, so loud that the Egyptians heard him (45:2). Then he said, "I am Joseph!" His brothers could not answer. They were troubled and afraid (45:3).

Joseph said, "Come near to me, I pray you." And they came near. He said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt" (45:4). **Read Genesis 45:5 from your Bible.** Say: "**Grieved** means very sad. **Hither** means here. **Preserve life** means keep people alive. Joseph told his brothers not to be sad or angry with themselves. God had sent him ahead of them to save lives!"

Joseph said the famine would last five more years (45:6). He told them to hurry home to his father and tell him to come down to Joseph and not wait. They would live in the land of **Goshen**, near him, with their children and their flocks and their herds, and he would take care of them (45:9–11). Then Joseph fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck (45:14). Joseph kissed all his brothers, and after that his brothers talked with him (45:15). Joseph did not pay them back. He forgave them!

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Who did Joseph send out of the room? *(Every man, everyone but his brothers, Genesis 45:1)*
2. What did Joseph say first to his brothers? *("I am Joseph," 45:3)*
3. What did Joseph ask his brothers to do? *("Come near to me," 45:4)*
4. Who sent Joseph to Egypt to preserve life? *(God, 45:5, 45:8)*
5. Which brother did Joseph hug and cry with? *(Benjamin, 45:14)*

4. Memory verse: Sent Before You (5 minutes)

Before class, write one part on each card and hide the cards around the room: *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.* Explain the old words: **grieved** means very sad, **ye** means you, **hither** means here, and **preserve life** means keep people alive. Say: "God sent Joseph ahead of his family. I sent our verse ahead of you!" Kids find the cards and put them in order. Read the verse together. Then turn one card over and read it again. Keep turning cards over until the kids can say the whole verse.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Joseph's brothers did something very wrong to him. But Joseph did not pay them back. He said, 'Come near to me,' and he kissed them. God wants us to forgive like that. The Bible says, '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 very much, and He wants to forgive you too. Everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: '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 we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
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: when someone hurts you, forgive them. Tell God about it, and be kind to them.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: 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), the coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/joseph-forgives-his-brothers), or **Come Near Pictures:** each child folds a paper in half. On one side, they draw Joseph and his brothers far apart. On the other side, they draw Joseph and his brother Benjamin weeping together (Genesis 45:14). Ask: *Who can you forgive this week?*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for forgiving us. Help us forgive others, even when they hurt us, like Joseph forgave his brothers. Thank You that You can turn hard things into good. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child says someone has hurt them: listen kindly. Forgiving does not mean that what happened was okay, and it never means keeping a secret or staying where you can be hurt. Joseph still said plainly what his brothers did: "whom ye sold into Egypt" (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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