Preschool–Grade 6

Joseph in Prison

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

Main point: Joseph gave God the credit, and he served God right where he was. We can too.
Bible passage: Genesis 40:1–23. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you." *Genesis 40:8 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, 8 purple paper circles, a marker, tape, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 8 purple circles (see part 4). Put a bookmark in your Bible at Genesis 40:8.

1. Opening game: Find the Sad Faces (5 minutes)

Pick one child to be "Joseph" and have them cover their eyes. Tap two other children to make sad faces. Everyone else smiles. "Joseph" opens their eyes, finds the two sad faces, and asks each one, "Why do you look so sad today?" Play a few rounds with a new "Joseph." Say: "Today we will meet a man in prison who noticed when others were sad, and then gave God the credit for the answer."

2. Bible story: Joseph in Prison (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Genesis 40, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

Joseph was in prison in Egypt, but he had done nothing wrong (Genesis 40:15). And the LORD was with Joseph (39:21). The keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners (39:22).

One day, two men who worked for **Pharaoh**, the king of Egypt, were put in the same prison. One was the chief **butler**, the man who served the king his drinks. The other was the chief **baker**, the man who made the king's bread. Pharaoh was **wroth**, which means very angry, with them (40:1–3). Joseph was told to take care of them, and Joseph **served** them (40:4).

One night, the butler and the baker each dreamed a dream (40:5). In the morning, Joseph came in and saw that they were sad (40:6). He asked them why they looked so sad that day (40:7). They said they had dreamed a dream, and no one could tell them what it meant (40:8).

Read Genesis 40:8 from your Bible: "Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you." Say: "An **interpretation** is what something means. Joseph said only God knows what the dreams mean. Joseph gave God the credit!"

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The story continues: The butler told his dream. He saw a **vine**, a grape plant, with three branches. It budded and bloomed, and it grew ripe grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in the butler's hand. He took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and he gave the cup to Pharaoh (40:9–11).

God showed Joseph what it meant. The three branches were three days. In three days Pharaoh would give the butler his job back, and he would hand Pharaoh his cup again (40:12–13)! Joseph asked the butler to remember him when it was well with him, to tell Pharaoh about him, and to help him get out of that place (40:14).

The baker told his dream too, about three white baskets on his head (40:16–17). But his dream was not good news (40:18–19).

Three days later was Pharaoh's birthday, and he made a feast (40:20). He gave the butler his job back, and the butler gave Pharaoh his cup, just as Joseph had said (40:21–22). **Read Genesis 40:23:** "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him." The butler forgot all about Joseph! But God did not forget Joseph. Two years later, the butler remembered, and Joseph was brought out to Pharaoh (41:1, 41:9–14).

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Where was Joseph? *(In prison in Egypt, Genesis 40:3)*
2. Who were the two men with Joseph? *(Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, 40:1–2)*
3. How did the men look in the morning? *(Sad, 40:6)*
4. Who did Joseph say the interpretations belong to? *(God, 40:8)*
5. Did the butler remember Joseph? *(No, he forgot him, 40:23)*

4. Memory verse: Grape Cluster (5 minutes)

Tape the 8 purple circles on the wall in a bunch like grapes, in order: *And they said unto him, / We have dreamed a dream, / and there is no interpreter of it. / And Joseph said unto them, / Do not interpretations / belong to God? / tell me them, / I pray you. Genesis 40:8.* Explain the old words: an **interpreter** is someone who tells what something means, and an **interpretation** is what it means. **I pray you** means please. Read the verse together. Then "pick" one grape off the bunch and read it again. Keep picking grapes until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The butler forgot Joseph, but God never forgot him. God never forgets you either. God loves you very much. But 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). That means none of us is as good as God. 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 you do something well, say, "Thank You, God, for helping me." And look for someone who looks sad, and be kind to them, like Joseph.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Joseph in prison word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/joseph-in-prison-word-search), the crossword, maze or worksheet, the craft (vbshq.com/crafts/joseph-in-prison-craft), or **Serve Where You Are:** Joseph served right where he was, even in prison (40:4). Give each child a small classroom job: stack the chairs, collect the crayons, wipe a table, line up the Bibles. When everyone is done, ask: *How did it feel to help? Where can you serve at home?*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You were with Joseph in prison and that You never forget us. Help us to give You the credit for every good thing, and to serve You right where we are. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks why Joseph was in prison: someone told a lie about him, and he was put in prison for something he did not do (Genesis 39:20; 40:15). God was with him there (39:21).
If a child asks what happened to the baker: say simply that his dream was bad news, and it came true (40:19, 40:22). Keep the focus on Joseph and God.

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