Preschool–Grade 6

Joseph and His Brothers

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

Main point: Joseph forgave his brothers. God was with Joseph and turned the bad into good. God can help me forgive too.
Bible passage: Genesis 37–50. This lesson tells Genesis 37, 39–45 and 50:15–21. Read them before class.
Memory verse: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." *Genesis 50:20 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, 6 paper strips, a marker, tape, 5 paper lunch bags, a small paper cup, a piece of aluminum foil, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 6 paper strips (see part 4). Wrap the paper cup in foil to make a "silver cup" (see part 6). Put bookmarks in your Bible at Genesis 39:2 and Genesis 50:20.

1. Opening game: Guess Who Is Talking (5 minutes)

One child sits in a chair facing the wall. Point to another child, who says, "Hello, brother!" in a funny voice: deep, squeaky or slow. The child in the chair guesses who is talking. Take turns. Then ask: *Is it hard to know someone when you can't see them well?* Say: "Today we will meet a man named Joseph. Many years after his brothers sold him, they came to him, and they didn't know who he was. The Bible says, 'Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him' (Genesis 42:8). **Brethren** means brothers."

2. Bible story: God Was with Joseph (12 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Genesis 37, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

Jacob, who was also called **Israel**, had twelve sons (Genesis 42:13). Jacob loved his son **Joseph** more than all his children, and he made him "a coat of many colours" (37:3). The Bible doesn't tell us which colors. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more, they **hated** him and could not speak kindly to him (37:4).

Joseph had two **dreams**. In the first dream, the brothers were tying up bundles of grain called **sheaves**. Joseph's sheaf stood up tall, and his brothers' sheaves bowed down to it (37:7). In the second dream, the sun, the moon and eleven stars bowed down to Joseph (37:9). When Joseph told his dreams, his brothers hated him even more (37:8).

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The story continues: One day Jacob sent Joseph to see how his brothers and the sheep were doing (37:13–14). When the brothers saw Joseph coming, they made a bad plan against him (37:18). His brother **Reuben** told them, "lay no hand upon him" (37:22), which means, "Don't hurt him." They took off Joseph's coat and put him in a **pit**, a deep hole in the ground. The pit was empty, with no water in it (37:23–24). Then traders came by on their way to Egypt. His brother **Judah** said, "Let us sell him" (37:27). So the brothers sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver, and the traders took him to **Egypt** (37:28). The brothers took Joseph's coat home, and their father Jacob thought a wild animal had killed Joseph. Jacob was very sad, and he cried for his son many days (37:31–35).

In Egypt, Joseph was sold to **Potiphar**, a leader who worked for **Pharaoh**, the king of Egypt (37:36, 39:1). **Read Genesis 39:2 from your Bible:** "And the LORD was with Joseph." Joseph worked hard, and Potiphar put him in charge of everything in his house (39:4). But Potiphar's wife told a lie about Joseph, and Joseph was put in **prison**, even though he had done nothing wrong (39:17–20). But the LORD was with Joseph there too, and the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners (39:21–22).

In the prison, two of Pharaoh's servants, the **butler** (who brought Pharaoh his cup) and the baker, each had a dream (40:1–5). Joseph said, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (40:8). That means only God knows what dreams mean. God showed Joseph what the dreams meant, and it all happened just as Joseph said (40:20–22). The butler went back to serve Pharaoh, but he forgot about Joseph for two whole years (40:23, 41:1).

Then Pharaoh had two dreams. Seven thin cows ate up seven fat cows. Seven thin **ears of corn** (heads of grain) ate up seven full, good ones (41:1–7). No one could tell Pharaoh what the dreams meant (41:8). Then the butler remembered Joseph, and Pharaoh sent for him (41:9–14). Joseph said, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (41:16). That means, "I can't do it, but God will give the answer." God showed Joseph that seven years of lots of food were coming, and then seven years of **famine**, when food would not grow (41:29–30). Joseph said to store up food in the good years (41:35–36). Pharaoh put Joseph over all the land of Egypt (41:41)! Joseph was thirty years old (41:46). He stored up so much **corn**, which means grain, that they stopped counting it (41:49).

Then the famine came, and there was no food in many lands. But in Egypt there was bread (41:54). Back home, Jacob sent ten of Joseph's brothers to Egypt to buy corn. He kept the youngest brother, **Benjamin**, at home (42:1–4). The brothers bowed down to Joseph with their faces to the ground (42:6). Joseph knew them, but they did not know him (42:8). Joseph remembered his dreams (42:9).

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The story continues: Joseph tested his brothers. He kept one brother, **Simeon**, in Egypt, and told the others to bring Benjamin the next time (42:19–20, 42:24). The brothers said to each other that they were guilty for what they had done to their brother (42:21). Joseph turned away from them and cried (42:24).

When the food ran out, the brothers came back to Egypt, and this time Benjamin came too (43:15). Joseph had his servant put his silver cup in Benjamin's sack of corn (44:2). When the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, Joseph said Benjamin must stay and be his servant (44:12, 44:17). But Judah begged to stay as a servant instead of Benjamin, so Benjamin could go home to their father (44:33). The brothers had changed!

Joseph could not hold back any more. He cried out loud (45:1–2) and said, **"I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt"** (45:4). His brothers were afraid (45:3). But Joseph said, "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves" (45:5). That means, "Don't be sad, and don't be angry with yourselves." He said, "God did send me before you to preserve life" (45:5), which means, "God sent me here to save lives." Joseph hugged Benjamin and cried, and he kissed all his brothers (45:14–15). Then their father Jacob and the whole family came to live in Egypt, and Jacob saw that Joseph was alive (45:28, 46:29–30).

Years later, after Jacob died, the brothers were afraid Joseph would pay them back. They asked him to **forgive** them (50:15–17). **Read Genesis 50:20 from your Bible:** "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." Joseph told them, "Fear not," and he spoke kindly to them (50:19–21). Joseph forgave his brothers!

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. What did Jacob make for Joseph? *("A coat of many colours," Genesis 37:3)*
2. What did the brothers do to Joseph? *(They put him in an empty pit and sold him to traders going to Egypt, 37:24–28)*
3. Who was with Joseph in Egypt, even in prison? *(The LORD, 39:2, 39:21)*
4. Why did Joseph's brothers come to Egypt? *(To buy corn, because of the famine, 42:1–3)*
5. What did Joseph say when his brothers asked him to forgive them? *("Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good," 50:20)*

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4. Memory verse: Coat Stripes Verse (5 minutes)

Tape the 6 strips on the wall, one under the other, like the stripes on a coat: *But as for you, / ye thought evil against me; / but God meant it unto good, / to bring to pass, as it is this day, / to save much people alive. / Genesis 50:20.* Explain the old words: **ye** means you; **thought evil against me** means planned something bad for me; **meant it unto good** means God planned it for good; **to bring to pass** means to make it happen; **to save much people alive** means to keep many people alive. Read the verse together. Then take one strip down and read it again. Keep taking down one strip each time until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Joseph's brothers did a very wrong thing, but Joseph forgave them. 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 someone is unkind to you, pray for them, forgive them and speak kindly to them, like Joseph did (Genesis 50:21).

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Joseph word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/joseph-word-search), the Joseph crossword, maze, coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/joseph), or **Whose Sack?:** stand the 5 paper bags in a row. These are the brothers' sacks of corn. While the class hides their eyes, one child hides the foil "silver cup" in one sack. The others take turns guessing which sack holds the cup and peek inside. Whoever finds it hides it next time. Say: "Joseph's silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack (Genesis 44:12)."

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You were with Joseph, even in the pit and in the prison. Help us forgive people who are unkind to us, and help us speak kindly to them. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

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Notes for the teacher

If a child asks what lie Potiphar's wife told: this lesson says only that she told a lie about Joseph, and he was put in prison (Genesis 39:17–20). Read Genesis 39:7–20 yourself before class. Answer simply: she said Joseph had done something bad, and he had not. Joseph had refused to do wrong, saying, "how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (39:9). You don't need to say more for this age.

If a child asks what happened to the baker: Joseph told him his dream meant bad news, and it came true (40:18–22). Say simply: "God showed Joseph the true meaning of both dreams. The baker's dream did not have a happy ending." You don't need to say more.

If a child asks why Joseph was rough with his brothers at first: the Bible says he "made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly" (42:7), but it doesn't explain all his reasons. It does show that he cried over them (42:24, 43:30) and forgave them (45:4–5, 50:19–21). Don't add a reason the Bible doesn't give.

Left out on purpose: Genesis 38 is a separate account about Judah, and it is not part of this lesson. This lesson also leaves out how the brothers dipped the coat in goat's blood (37:31); it says only that they took the coat home and their father thought a wild animal had killed Joseph (37:32–33).

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