

HOPE IN HARDSHIP

Joseph
Genesis 37;
45:1–10; 50:20
1899–1876 BC

OVERVIEW

BIBLE TRUTH

God works for the good of His people.

BIBLE VERSE

You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.
Genesis 50:20

LEARNER GOAL

I understand that God works for the good of His people.

LAW & GOSPEL

We question God's will for us and are tempted to doubt His love for us when we experience troubles.

God assures us of His love for us through Jesus, our Savior, and helps us in our troubles, enabling us to serve our neighbors in the vocations He has given us.

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

The account of Jacob's favorite son, Joseph, is a turning point in the history of God's people. The unusual timeline of Joseph's life includes him being despised by his brothers, sold into slavery, attaining success and then losing it all to false accusations, being imprisoned, and serving the court of Pharaoh. Joseph summarizes his life in one sentence addressed to his brothers: "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20).

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read Genesis 37; 45:1–10; 50:20 and notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

MORE TIME Read the leader devotion, found in the digital resource center.

IN DEPTH Review the section "The First Article (Part 2)" in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (2017), paying special attention to Question 138 and how Christians are to respond to evil and suffering.

SUPPLY LIST

FOR THIS LESSON

- Paper hearts
- Crackers and raisins or fruit snacks
- Paper grocery bags
- White T-shirts and fabric markers
- Digital device

FOR EVERY LESSON

- Bible
- Device with prepped music
- Copies of downloadable activity page
- Copies of Enduring Faith Page
- Supply Box

LAUNCH

Plan your lesson by reading through the options in each section. Choose the activities that will best fit your learners, and mark those boxes to guide you as you teach the lesson.

BEGIN

- Follow the Order of Opening Worship, use the Lesson Opening, or do both (part of the planning resources in the digital resource center).
- Sing songs using music found in the digital resource center, or sing your own favorite songs.

PRAY

Dear Lord, bless us as we gather to study Your Word today. Help us to learn that You work for the good of Your people. Amen.

LEARN

Show your Bible, and remind the children that all the stories in God's Word are true.

TELL THE BIBLE NARRATIVE

Choose one of the options on the next page to tell the Bible narrative.

DO THIS!

Use one or more of the following activities to talk about the Bible narrative after you've read it.

- FOR ACTIVE LEARNERS** Joseph's life was kind of like a roller coaster—lots of ups and downs. As you read the account, ask students to stand, sit, and kneel as Joseph experiences highs and lows in life.
- FOR VISUAL LEARNERS** After learning the account for the day, jot down some main highlights of Joseph's life as well as some key points in the story. Pass out some paper (the larger the better) and markers, asking students to work in small groups to make a movie poster for the account. If you have space, hang them up in the room or in the hallway for a week.

SAY

- How do you treat someone you don't like? Do you say or do mean things? Today you'll hear about a boy who got a new coat from his dad. That made his brothers mad, so they were mean to him. But God helped the boy in his troubles.**
- Have you ever seen videos of animals making mistakes? Sometimes it can be pretty funny. How do you react when things don't go your way?**

TALK ABOUT IT

Choose a few questions that best fit the learning level of your group.

- Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him into slavery. He ended up in Egypt, far away from home. How do you think Joseph felt? How might you feel?
- Joseph's brothers planned for Joseph to be gone forever. Joseph probably had planned to stay with his family. But God's plan was bigger. How did God's plan for Joseph bless Joseph? his family? Egypt? the surrounding areas? all people, including you?

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Guide discussion using these key points.

- Joseph was certainly sad, and maybe scared. But he trusted in God to take care of him. We might feel scared or sad or lonely too at times. God will always be with us and take care of us, just as He cared for Joseph.
- God's plan was bigger than anyone could have imagined: it involved rescuing Joseph, Egypt, Joseph's family, and ultimately everyone, as Jesus was a descendant of Joseph's brother.



CHRIST CONNECTION

God is always working for our good. God sent Jesus to help us with our biggest troubles—sin, death, and the devil—by dying on the cross for us and rising again.

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

STORYTELLING DIRECTIONS: Draw faces on three paper plates to show these feelings: glad (happy face), mad (angry face), and sad (sad face), or have children show these emotions on their faces as you tell the story. Have children name times they are glad, mad, and sad.

Joseph was a happy boy. *Show glad face.* He belonged to a big family. Joseph had ten older brothers and one younger brother named Benjamin. His older brothers looked after the sheep and goats in the fields.

Their father, Jacob, loved all his sons. But he loved Joseph most of all. One day, Jacob gave Joseph a new coat with many pretty colors in it. Joseph was happy with his new coat. *Show glad face.* But Jacob did not give coats to Joseph's brothers.

I wonder . . . how do you think Joseph's brothers felt about this? *Pause for answer.*

Let's find out

Joseph's brothers were mad! *Show mad face.* They said and did mean things to Joseph. One night Joseph had a dream. The next day Joseph told his brothers, "I dreamed that we tied bundles of grain in the field. My bundle stood straight up. Your bundles bowed down to mine."

This made the brothers mad too. *Show mad face.* "Do you think you are better than us?" they asked Joseph.

After this, the brothers took the sheep far away to find grass and water. Joseph's father asked Joseph to take some food to them. Joseph was happy to help. *Show glad face.* The

brothers saw Joseph coming across the fields in his pretty coat. They said, "Here comes the dreamer. Let's kill him."

"No," said the oldest brother. "Don't hurt him. Let's just put him in this deep hole." So that's what they did. Now Joseph felt scared and sad. *Show sad face.* Later, his brothers sold him to some strangers who took Joseph far away to Egypt.

Many things happened to Joseph in Egypt. He often felt sad and alone. *Show sad face.* But Joseph knew God would take care of him. This made Joseph happy. *Show glad face.* God took good care of Joseph in Egypt. He gave Joseph a new home, an important job, and everything he needed.

Many years later, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt for food. Joseph was now an important helper for the king. He gave his brothers food. He remembered they had been mean to him. His brothers were afraid Joseph would be mean to them now. But Joseph forgave his brothers. This made everyone happy. *Show glad face.*

Sometimes things happen that make us feel sad. *Show sad face.* But we can be happy, too, because God always loves and cares for us. *Show glad face.* He turns bad times into something good.

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Of all his twelve sons, Jacob loved one far more than the others, Joseph, Rachel's firstborn. Jacob gave him a special robe. That made Joseph's brothers jealous and angry.

It got worse when **God gave Joseph two special dreams.** The dreams made Joseph look more important than the other brothers. **His brothers were so furious they could not talk with him.** Even Jacob thought Joseph had gone too far this time. He told Joseph he shouldn't talk that way about his dream.

One day, Joseph's brothers were out watching the sheep. Jacob sent Joseph to check on them. The brothers saw Joseph coming, and **they wanted to kill him.** But the oldest brother, Reuben, cared about his father. So he convinced his brothers to **put Joseph into a pit instead.** After they left, he planned to come back and pull Joseph out again.

While Reuben was gone, the fourth brother, Judah, said, "Let's not kill him; he is our brother, after all. **Let's sell him as a slave instead.**" The brothers liked that idea, so they pulled him out of the pit, took his robe away from him, and sold him to some men who were traveling to Egypt. The brothers took a goat and killed it. They took Joseph's fancy robe, tore it, and dipped it in the goat's blood. When Jacob saw the coat, he believed the brothers'

lie. He was so sad and upset that no one could make him happy.

Many things happened to Joseph in Egypt. Sometimes he was in power; sometimes he was in prison. No matter what, **God blessed Joseph's work.** Eventually, Joseph was put in charge of everything in Egypt.

Food wouldn't grow in Egypt, but **Joseph had helped Egypt store up food.** Food wouldn't grow in the Promised Land either. **When Jacob learned Egypt was selling food, he sent his ten oldest sons to buy some.**

When they got to Egypt, Joseph knew who they were right away, but they didn't know it was Joseph. If he had wanted, he could have been really mean—just like they had been to him. But **God had helped him forgive them.** Before he revealed himself, Joseph would be God's instrument to drive his brothers to repentance.

Finally, Joseph knew his brothers were really sorry for what they did to him. He told them, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?"

He told them to rush home and bring Jacob to come and live with him in Egypt. **When Jacob learned Joseph was alive and ruling in Egypt, he praised God.** He took his whole family and all his animals, and they went to live with Joseph in Egypt.

LIVE

Choose from the following activities and crafts to help connect Bible learning to life.

Play Joseph's Coat

Stand in a circle. Hand out pairs of hearts in different colors. If there is an uneven number of children, you take a heart too. When the leader calls a color, the two children with that color exchange spots. Continue with other colors. Periodically, call out, "Joseph's Coat," and have all the children move to a new place.



Action Rhyme

Talk about where God watches over us (for example, riding in the car, playing on the playground, in bed). Say the action rhyme with the children.

God keeps me safe all through the day.

(Point up. Hug self.)

When asleep and when at play

(Put hands on head. Jump.)

He watches over all I do.

(Point up. Point to self.)

He does the same for you and you!

(Point up. Point to others.)

Thank You, God.

(Clap.)



Play Dough Fun

Set out play dough in different colors. Encourage the children to make their family members out of play dough. Talk about happy, sad, and mad times in families. Ask them to tell you about the mad, sad, and glad times in Joseph's family.



Happy/Sad Snack

Set out round crackers and raisins. Have the children make happy and sad faces or crosses on their crackers. Talk about how God cares for us through happy and sad times. *Option:* Serve packages of fruit snacks. Talk about the colorful snack and Joseph's colorful coat. Review the story as you enjoy the snack.



Joseph's Coat

Make Joseph's coat! Use a paper grocery bag (do an online search for a pattern) and decorate with yarn, buttons, markers, and construction paper. Or bring in plain white T-shirts and let children decorate with fabric markers. Use newspaper to keep tables and the backs of the shirts safe.



Mini Movie

Ask your group to act out a portion of the account today. They could perform it live, or you could take a video of each scene and show it together as a mini movie. Be sure you have parental permission to record students.



LEAVE

SAY

Joseph reminded his brothers and us: "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20). God used Joseph to bless others, and He uses us wherever He places us for the good of others.

PRAY

Thank You, heavenly Father, for knowing exactly what we need. Help us to remember that You work for our good in Jesus. In His name we pray. Amen.