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Jacob and Esau

Scripture: Genesis 25:19-34; 27:1-40

Theme: God works through imperfect people

1st-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: Joseph , God Works All Things for Good Introduction (Engage the Heart): Start by asking kids, "Who has ever felt like they were in a big mess or had a hard time?" Hold up a small, messy jar (or draw one) and say, "What do we do when things feel out of control? Today, we'll learn about Joseph, a boy who faced big challenges, but God was with him, and He used those times for something wonderful!" Key Message (Explain with a Story): Joseph was Jacob's favorite son, and his brothers jealous of him sold him into slavery (Genesis 37). Though he was taken far from home and wronged, God protected him in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39) and later in prison (Genesis 40). Even when Pharaoh put him in prison for two years, God used those years to prepare him for his ultimate purpose: saving Egypt from famine (Genesis 41, 45). Even in his lowest moment, being thrown into a pit and sold as a slave, God was working everything for good (Romans 8:28)! Big Idea (Apply to Life Today): God doesn't always fix things immediately, but He is always with us. Joseph's brothers cried when they saw him again (Genesis 45), and Jesus said, "I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). When we face hard times, like being left out, losing something, or feeling alone, we can trust God to use them for good. Ask kids: "Where have you felt God working in your life, even in a tough situation?" Let them share quietly. Challenge (End with Encouragement): Give each child a small paper crown (or have them make one) and say, "This isn't a crown for being perfect, but for remembering: God is with you, even when things don't go your way. He has a plan for your story too!" End with prayer: "God, thank You for being with us in hard times. Help us trust You like Joseph did." Teacher Notes: - Use visuals: A "Joseph's Journey" timeline with icons for his steps (sold, in prison, saved Egypt). - For older kids, add: "God's 'yes' sometimes comes after a 'no' (Joseph's wrongful arrest) or a 'wait' (2 years in prison)." - Praise their courage to share their own struggles (if they're ready!) in a group hug or prayer time. Keep energy high with a song like "Jesus Loves the Little Children" (refrain) or "Our God is a Mighty God" (adapted).

Bible Story

Joseph: God Works All Things for Good

Once upon a time, long ago, God had a special dream for one of His children, a boy named Joseph. Joseph was the favorite of his father, Jacob, and his brothers didn't like it. They were jealous because Joseph loved God and his dad more than they did. So, one day, Joseph's brothers tricked him by saying their father wanted him to stay home. Instead of going, Joseph was taken far away, probably to Egypt, to work for a man named Potiphar. Joseph was faithful to God even there, and he trusted that God would help him.

While Joseph was in Egypt, something terrible happened to his family, their father, Jacob, and all their other children died. Joseph cried for many days because he missed them, but he didn't give up. He knew God was still with him. Later, Potiphar's wife tried to trick Joseph, but he stayed true to God and refused her. God made Joseph so successful in his work that he became the master of the whole house. He even saved Potiphar from his wife's lies!

One day, Joseph's boss, a man named Pharaoh, had a big dream that only Joseph could understand. Joseph told Pharaoh the meaning of the dream, and because of his wisdom, Pharaoh made Joseph his chief advisor. Later, a bad time came in Egypt, a big famine hit the whole country, and many people, including Joseph's family, traveled there to find food. When Joseph's brothers finally came to Egypt, he didn't act angry, he forgave them! Instead, he told them to bring their father and their whole family to Egypt to live. Joseph had saved his family from a bad time, and he knew God had prepared him for this!

This story shows us that God works all things for good, even when things seem hard or unfair. Even when Joseph's brothers mistreated him, God used their wrong choices to bring them and his family to safety. Joseph learned to trust God even when things were difficult, and he forgave his brothers. We can learn from Joseph to trust God in our own lives, even when things don't go our way, God can turn them into good things if we trust Him!

Why This Story Matters: Joseph's story reminds us that God always has a plan, even when life feels messy. Just like Joseph, we can choose to trust God in hard times and forgive others. When we do that, God can work in our lives too, turning bad things into good ones. Let's remember to trust God, just like Joseph did!

Key Verse

Genesis 25:23

Genesis 50:20 , A Kind God's Plan When we read this verse, we see how Joseph, who had once been treated unfairly by his brothers, realized something amazing: even when people tried to hurt him, God had a different plan. Joseph didn't stay mad or give up, he trusted God and believed that everything that happened was part of God's big, loving plan to help him and others. This verse tells us that God can take even the hardest things in our lives and turn them into something good, just like He did for Joseph. Sometimes, kids face tough situations, like when a friend says they don't want to play together, or when something breaks that they really wanted, or even when they feel left out. It might feel like those moments were meant to hurt them, but God can still turn them into something good. Maybe it helps them learn to be kinder, to work on their friendships, or to remember that God is always with them, watching over them. Just like Joseph, we can trust that God knows what's best and will help us through it. You might wonder, How can God turn bad things into good? Well, think about a time you felt sad or frustrated, maybe you didn't get a chance to do something you really wanted, or you had a small accident. God didn't cause those things, but He can use them to teach us lessons and bring us closer to Him. For example, if we practice patience when something doesn't go our way, we learn to be more understanding of others. If we ask God to help us through hard times, He might give us strength to keep going! Let's talk about how we can apply this today. When something goes wrong, like when we're disappointed or feel left out, we can take a deep breath and remember: God sees everything, and He loves us. Instead of getting upset, we can pray and ask Him to help us see His plan. Maybe it's just for today, or maybe it's for a bigger lesson later, but God will help us know that even when things feel hard, He is working for our good. Here's something fun to remember: Just like Joseph trusted God, you can trust God too! When you feel sad or confused, say a little prayer like this: "God, I don't understand right now, but I trust You. Help me see Your good plan." You might not see the answer right away, but God will help you know that He's got your back. And just like Joseph turned his bad days into good ones, you can too!

Activities

Activity 1:

Students create a simple, colorful depiction of Joseph's coat and the story of his brothers' jealousy, using the Bible as a guide.

1. Read Genesis 37:3-4 aloud with the class. Ask: "What special colors did Joseph's coat have? How did his brothers feel about it?" Write key words (jealousy, colors) on the board for discussion.
2. Fold a sheet of black paper in half to make a "coat" shape. Let each child glue or draw the colors of Joseph's coat (red, blue, and sometimes gold) along the edges. Encourage them to imagine how they felt when they saw it, jealous, proud, or something else.
3. Cut out a small paper plate or draw a heart on a separate sheet to represent Joseph's love for God, even when things got hard. Glue it next to the coat or tape it to the back.
4. Discussion: "How can we trust God even when things feel unfair, like Joseph's brothers?" End by praying together.

Activity 2:

Kids work in pairs to decorate small pots to show how God turns bad things into good (like when Joseph was sold into slavery). They'll paint and glue to create a "God's Promise" message.

1. Read Genesis 39:2-6 (Joseph's job in Potiphar's house) and Genesis 50:20 (Joseph's words to his brothers). Ask: "What did Joseph do when things got hard? How can we do the same?" Write these ideas on the board.
2. Divide the class into pairs (2-3 students per pot). Give each pair a small pot and a mix of paints. Ask them to paint their pots to look like Joseph's life, e.g., paint the bottom red (like the "bad" pot in Potiphar's house) and the top green (like the "good" work he did).
3. While painting, have each child write or draw a simple message like:
4. "God turns bad into good!"
5. "Even in hard times, I can trust Him."
6. "Like Joseph, I'll keep going!" on the pot's side.
7. Display the pots around the room. Ask the class: "What did Joseph learn from his hard times? How can we apply that to our own lives?" Pray together that they'll trust God in their own struggles.
8. Note: Both activities emphasize Joseph's trust in God, even when things were unfair, and encourage kids to see challenges as opportunities for growth!

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions about Joseph, God Works All Things for Good, that encourage young children (ages 6, 8) to think deeply, reflect, and connect the story to their lives:
- What Was Joseph's Big Dream, and What Happened When He Shared It?
- Joseph shared his dream with his brothers and his father, but they didn't understand it at first. They were jealous and tried to hurt him. What do you think makes a dream feel special? Have you ever shared something you really cared about with a friend or family member? What happened when you did? How might your feelings change if someone didn't believe you or didn't understand you?
- Follow-up: How can we share our dreams or ideas in a way that helps others understand, even if they don't like what we say?
- Why Did Joseph's Brothers Sell Him into Slavery? What Did They Think Was Wrong with Him?
- Joseph's brothers were jealous of him because he was their favorite and had special gifts. They didn't think he deserved to be happy, so they sold him away. Have you ever felt like someone didn't like you just because of who

you are? Maybe because you're kind, smart, or different? How did Joseph's story show that God sees people differently than other people do? What can we learn about kindness and fairness from Joseph's example?

- Follow-up: If you were in Joseph's brothers' shoes, what might have made you jealous or angry? How can we help others feel loved, even if they don't act like we expect?
- How Did Joseph End Up in Prison Instead of Being King?
- Joseph was sold to an Egyptian man who took him to Egypt. Even though he worked hard, people mistreated him, and he ended up in prison. Later, the Pharaoh's cupbearer forgot about him, and the Pharaoh's baker forgot about him too. What do you think made it hard for Joseph to stay positive in prison? Have you ever felt like no one remembered you or believed in you? How did Joseph finally get out of prison? What was the Pharaoh's dream, and how did Joseph help him?
- Follow-up: Joseph's story shows that God sometimes uses hard things to prepare us for bigger blessings. What is one challenge you're facing right now? How might God be preparing you for something good in the future?
- What Happened When Joseph's Brothers Came to Egypt to Get Food?
- Joseph's brothers didn't know he was in Egypt, but he knew who they were and forgave them. He also told them to bring Benjamin, his youngest brother, so he could see his family again. Have you ever had a time when you forgave someone who hurt you? Or maybe you were the one who needed forgiveness? Why was it so important for Joseph to forgive his brothers? What did they learn from Joseph that they hadn't learned before?
- Follow-up: Joseph's family had to travel a long way to see him. How do you think it felt to be far away from your family for so long? What can we learn about trusting God even when things feel hard or far away?
- These questions encourage discussion, empathy, and personal reflection while keeping the story simple and engaging for young children. Would you like any adjustments to make them even easier or more detailed?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus for Young Learners Dear God, We thank You for the story of Joseph, who was loved by his family but treated unfairly. Even when bad things happened to him, like when his brothers sold him away and he was thrown into prison, You still cared for him. You helped him become the ruler of Egypt and saved his family from a big famine. God works all things for good, even when it feels hard. Help us to trust You, just like Joseph did, when things don't go our way. Teach us to be kind, to follow You even when it's hard, and to remember that You always have a plan to make things right. Amen! How to Use This Prayer: - Step 1: Sit in a circle and say, "Let's pray for a special friend who might feel left out or sad today!" (or a classmate named Joseph). - Step 2: Read a simple verse like Genesis 50:20 ("Don't worry about what happened to him... God is still in control!"). - Step 3: Ask, "How can we trust God, like Joseph did?" Let children share ideas (e.g., being brave, helping others). - Step 4: End with, "Amen!" and sing a short song or wave your hands up and down to feel God's love! Why It Works: Joseph's story teaches us that God doesn't let bad things go to waste, He turns them into good. By praying together, kids learn to see challenges as opportunities to trust and grow. Use this prayer to start a discussion: "What's something you're worried about? How can we pray for it?" Keep it short, heartfelt, and full of hope!

>> Missions Spotlight

The Maasai people of East Africa have a strong oral tradition of stories about suffering and redemption. Missionaries have found that Joseph's story connects deeply, and the Maasai concept of 'Enkai' (God) provides a starting point for sharing the full Gospel.

-> To the Cross

Joseph was betrayed, enslaved, and imprisoned, yet God used it all to save many lives. In the same way, Jesus was betrayed and crucified, the worst evil, yet God used it to save the world. What people meant for evil, God meant for good.