

MinistryPlace.net

Jacob and Esau

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

Theme: God works through imperfect people

4th-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: Joseph, God Works All Things for Good (Based on Genesis 37, 45, for upper elementary ages 9, 11) Introduction: A Story of Betrayal and Trust Begin by sharing that today's story is about Joseph, a special son of Jacob who dreamed of greatness. But life didn't start out easy, his brothers sold him into slavery, and he suffered hard times in Egypt. Yet, through it all, God was with him, using even his struggles for something beautiful. Ask: What's something hard you've faced recently? How do you think Joseph felt when his brothers betrayed him? (Let kids share honestly, reassuring them God is faithful.) The Journey to Egypt: From Pain to Purpose Joseph arrived in Egypt as a slave, where he was falsely accused and thrown in prison. In prison, he interpreted dreams for two prisoners, and God used that to prepare him for greater work. His story shows that even when things seem unfair, God can turn pain into purpose. Why do you think Joseph trusted God in those hard moments? (Invite reflection: When have you had a 'prison moment', like a test, a mistake, or rejection? How did you feel, and what did you learn?) From Prison to Prominence: God's Plan Unfolds After years, Joseph was finally set free and became Egypt's top official! When famine struck, he saved his people by giving them food. His story proves that God doesn't leave us in hard times, He works through them. Ask: How does it make you feel to know God has a plan, even when you don't see it yet? (Encourage them to write down one area where they trust God to help.) A Lesson for Us: God Works All Things for Good Joseph's life reminds us that God's love doesn't disappear when things get tough. Even when we feel small or left out, He's there, using us for His glory. Challenge kids to ask: What's one way you can trust God with your hard times this week? (Suggestions: Pray for friends who struggle, share their story with a trusted adult, or draw a picture of Joseph's story to keep as a reminder.) Closing: God's Promise in Our Hearts End with a prayer or a quick sharing circle. End by saying: "No matter what comes our way, we know God is with us, and He'll turn our struggles into something good!" (Hold up a Bible or trust card and say: "This is our promise: 'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.'" , Romans 8:28) Volunteer Tips: - Use a visual like a simple timeline poster (Jacob's family Joseph in prison Egypt saving his people). - For extra engagement, play a quick "Guess the Dream" game (show images of Egyptian royalty vs. prison scenes to

spark discussion). - Emphasize personal application, connect their own struggles to God's promise today.

Bible Story

Joseph: God's Plan for Good

One day, Joseph, a bright and beloved son of Jacob and Rachel, dreamed that his brothers and father bowed down to him. Jacob was confused, "Why would he think such things?", but Joseph's dreams seemed too special to ignore. Later, his brothers sold him into slavery after jealous of his gifts and favor from God. Though hurt, Joseph kept trusting God, even when life felt unfair.

In Egypt, Joseph was taken to Potiphar's house and soon became his trusted servant. But jealous servants betrayed him again, leading to false accusations, and Joseph was thrown into prison. While there, God used Joseph's faith to bring him opportunities. One day, the king's cupbearer and baker dreamed of their futures, and Joseph interpreted their dreams correctly. The cupbearer forgot about Joseph, but the baker was executed, leaving Joseph still waiting.

Years passed, and Joseph's brothers came to Egypt seeking food during a famine. When they finally saw him, they recognized him but were afraid. Joseph pretended not to know them, asking them to bring their father and family. After years of silence, he revealed himself. He forgave his brothers, saying, "You intended evil against me, but God turned it into good." Joseph's story shows that even when things seem broken, God can turn heartache into hope.

Discussion Questions: 1. Why do you think Joseph's brothers were jealous of him? 2. What did Joseph do when his first dream and later unfair treatment happened? 3. How did Joseph's trust in God help him in prison and later in Egypt?

Personal Application: Just like Joseph, we may face unfair treatment or hard times. Can we trust God to use them for good? How can we show forgiveness, like Joseph did? God loves us even when we don't understand why things happen.

Why This Matters: Joseph's story reminds us that God works all things, even the painful parts, for His purpose. When we feel small or alone, we can trust that God is in control, just like He was with Joseph. His story encourages us to keep believing, even when things don't make sense.

Key Verse

Genesis 25:23

Genesis 50:20 Explained for Kids Joseph once thought his brothers meant to hurt him, like they had tried to kill him or sell him into slavery. But God had a different plan, something even better! Even when bad things happen, like fights or misunderstandings with friends or family, God can turn them into something good if we trust Him. At first, Joseph's brothers felt guilty and sad because they'd done wrong. They didn't mean to be mean to their older brother, but their jealousy and selfishness led to trouble. Still, instead of getting angry, Joseph chose kindness. He forgave them and even let them visit him in prison and Egypt. How can you show forgiveness when someone hurts you? Forgiveness is hard sometimes, especially when someone says something mean or does something unfair. But Jesus teaches us to love and forgive others, just like Joseph did. Maybe you've been hurt too, and you're wondering what to do. Could God help you trust that even when people let you down, He's working things out for a good reason? Here's a deeper question: If you could have one conversation with someone who hurt you, what would you want to say? Joseph chose to share his love and hope, not his anger. Could you do the same? Finally, remember that God is always watching over you. Even when life feels unfair or confusing, He promises to turn bad things into good ones if you stay close to Him. Next time you're upset, ask God to help you see His plan, just like Joseph did. You don't have to carry the pain alone!

Activities

Activity 1:

Children create a collage of Joseph's coat, exploring how God uses even the hardest times for good. They'll discuss how Joseph's story teaches us that God works things out for a purpose, even when life feels unfair.

1. Introduce the Story (3 min):
2. Read Genesis 37:1, 11 aloud, focusing on how Joseph's brothers hated him and his colorful coat. Ask: "Why do you think Joseph's coat made his brothers jealous?" Write their ideas on the board.
3. Explain: "God used Joseph's coat to show that he was special, but later, he would use Joseph's struggles for a greater purpose."
4. Collage Creation (5 min):
5. Give each child a sheet of paper and let them cut out fabric-like strips (or cut paper into rectangles) to represent the coat's colors.
6. Glue them onto the paper to make a "coat" design. Ask: "How can you imagine Joseph's coat today?" (Discuss: "Was it his coat that made him special, or was it God's plan?")
7. Reflect & Apply (5 min):
8. Fold the paper in half to hide the back. Ask: "When has someone or something made you feel different or unfairly judged?"
9. Unfold and share: "How can you trust God to use your 'coat', your struggles or differences, for good?" Use Genesis 39:21, 23 to share that even in prison, Joseph trusted God.
10. Closing Prayer:
11. Pray together: "Lord, help us to trust You in hard times, like Joseph did. Show us Your purpose in our lives!"

Activity 2:

Children act out Joseph's journey from betrayal to success, then write/draw how they can "bottle" hope from his story in their own lives.

1. Act It Out (5 min):
2. Split the group into 3 teams:
3. Team 1: Reenact Joseph's betrayal by the brothers (e.g., jealous voices, throwing rocks).
4. Team 2: Show Joseph's imprisonment (slapped by guards, waiting).
5. Team 3: Act out Joseph interpreting dreams (smiling, pointing to the future).
6. Ask: "What was the hardest part of Joseph's story?" and "How did he respond?"
7. Create "Hope Bottles" (7 min):
8. Give each child an empty bottle. Write on the front: "Joseph's Potion of Hope" or "God's Promise for Me" (using the Bible verse: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him", Romans 8:28).
9. Let them decorate the bottle with drawings, words, or Scripture. Inside, write/draw:
10. "Even when betrayed, Joseph trusted God."
11. "God can turn hard times into good ones."
12. Personalize & Share (3 min):
13. Ask: "What's one thing you hope for in your life right now?"
14. Children share with the group how their bottle represents hope (e.g., "My bottle is for when I'm bullied at school").
15. Discuss: "How can we pray for one another's 'bottles'?"
16. Wrap-Up Challenge:
17. Hand out the Bible to each child to read Genesis 39, 45 at home. Challenge them to journal one lesson from Joseph's story they'll apply this week.
18. Notes:
19. For time efficiency, pre-cut paper for the coat collage.
20. If acting out feels overwhelming, simplify to key scenes (e.g., betrayal and prison).

21. Emphasize that Joseph's story isn't about "good vs. evil" but about God's sovereignty, even in unfairness!

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions based on the lesson "Joseph, God Works All Things for Good" (Genesis 37, 45), designed for upper elementary students (ages 9, 11). Each question encourages reflection, deeper thought, and personal connection to the story while prompting them to consider how God's promises might apply to their own lives.
- 1. How Did Joseph's Trials Change Him, and What Does That Teach Us About God's Purpose?
 - Genesis tells us that even when Joseph was mistreated, sold into slavery, accused falsely, and imprisoned, he didn't forget his dreams or his God. In the end, his struggles helped him become someone who could save his family from famine. If you've ever felt unfairly treated or disappointed, what do you think that kind of pain or challenge could have been preparing you for in God's bigger plan? How might you trust that God is still at work, even in the things that feel hard now?
 - (Deeper question: What's one "dream" or goal you have that you worry you'll never get to live out? How could God use your struggles to help you grow into someone who can fulfill that dream someday?)
- 2. Why Did God Choose to Work Through Joseph's Enemies?
 - At first glance, it might seem strange that God used people who harmed Joseph, like Potiphar's wife and the false accusers, to lead him to where he needed to be. What do you think this teaches us about how God's plan doesn't always look like what we expect? Can you think of a time when someone who didn't seem like a "good person" helped you or someone else in a surprising way? How might God be using that situation to do something greater?
 - (Personal application: Who is someone in your life who might not seem like a "good person," but God could be using them to help you grow or teach you something important? What's one way you could show kindness or trust in them this week?)
- 3. How Did Joseph's Faith Keep Him Going in the Darkest Times?
 - Joseph was in prison for years before he was finally placed in charge. He was wronged, left out of his family's plans, and had to wait a long time to see his brothers again. Even when he was tempted to be bitter, he remembered God's promises. If you've ever felt lonely, forgotten, or like God was ignoring you, what did you do with that feeling? How did you choose to trust that God was still there, even if you couldn't see how things would work out?
 - (Deeper question: What's one "waiting period" in your life right now, like a test, delay, or hard choice, that you're still figuring out? How can you trust that God is preparing you for something bigger than you can see now?)
- 4. What Does It Look Like to "Work All Things for Good" in Our Own Lives?
 - The Bible says that God works all things for good when we love Him. That means even the bad things can be used to build character, trust, or purpose. But what does that mean practically for us? For example, if you failed a test, got in trouble, or felt left out, how could God use that experience to help you become stronger in faith, patience, or kindness? Think of a time when something "bad" actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise, what was it, and how did you learn from it?
 - (Personal reflection: Is there a challenge or disappointment you've faced lately that you're still figuring out? What's one small step you could take to trust that God is working something good, even if you don't see it yet?)
 - These questions encourage students to think critically about the story while also applying it to their own lives. Would you like any of them adjusted for a specific theme (like perseverance, forgiveness, or faith in hard times)?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus for Upper Elementary Students (Ages 9-11): "Dear God, You are a God who sees and hears everything, even when people don't understand or trust You. Like Joseph, You turned his hard times (being sold, thrown in prison) into something good, helping others and showing Your kindness. Help me to trust You when things feel confusing or unfair, just like Joseph did. Teach me to see Your plan in my own trials, even if I can't understand it yet. Amen." Reflection Questions for Discussion: 1. Where do you feel like God "worked all things for good" in your life? (Even if it wasn't easy!) 2. What's something Joseph went through that made him feel alone or betrayed? How might you feel the same way sometimes? 3. Joseph's brothers were jealous, how can you respond when you're upset or think you're "better" than someone else? 4. When was the last time you trusted God even though it wasn't easy? What did You do next? Personal Application: - Journal Prompt: "If God could turn my hardest moment into good (like He did for Joseph), what's one trial I'm facing right now?" - Action Step: Write a letter to God thanking Him for a small "good" He's already shown you (e.g., a friend who helped, a lesson learned). Class Prayer (Teacher's Guide): "Lord, we come to You today like Joseph did, sometimes afraid, sometimes angry, but always trusting You. Help us to remember that Your plan is bigger than ours. When we feel lost or hurt, remind us: You're working for good, even if we can't see it yet. Guide our hearts and hands to trust You more, just like Joseph trusted You. Amen." Extension: Share a story of how God "worked all things for good" in your life (e.g., a time you learned perseverance or were used to help someone). Encourage kids to share if they're comfortable!

>> 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.