

Joseph Forgives His Brothers

Overview



Materials You'll Need

- red (or pink) construction paper
- yarn
- scissors
- assorted stickers
- hole punch
- markers



Scriptures

Gen 42:1-46:12

Bible Truth Objective(s)

God wants us to forgive others after they've done wrong to us.

Behavioral Objective(s)

To understand what it means to forgive; to love one another and forgive others of their wrongdoing.

Memory Verse

"Forgiving one another." (Col 3:13)



Bible Knowledge

Joseph's Forgiveness

Joseph was seventeen when he was sold into slavery by his brothers. He was thirty years old when he became governor of Egypt (Gen 41:46). Therefore he must have spent around eleven years as an Egyptian slave and two years in prison (Gen 41:1). Even though Joseph was rejected, enslaved, and imprisoned because of his brothers' evil plan, God used their wickedness to fulfill His ultimate will. Therefore, Joseph said, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Gen 50:20).

Later, when Jacob died, the brothers feared revenge from Joseph. Had he really forgiven them for selling him into slavery? They probably thought that Joseph had initially forgiven them for the sake of their father. Families were very important in those days. Children were expected to respect and obey their parents and elders without question. The family usually lived together or at least not too far away from each other. So it would have been normal for Joseph to put all things aside for the sake of

Jacob. It was his duty to obey and take care of him. But when Jacob died, the brothers thought that there was no need for Joseph to show respect anymore. They were truly afraid for their lives and took the first step to ask for forgiveness once again (Gen 50:15-18). To their surprise, Joseph not only forgave them but offered to care for them and their families. Joseph's forgiveness was complete. Joseph's life taught him that God brings about good from evil for those who trust him.

Egypt

In the days of Joseph, Egypt was one of the richest and most powerful countries. It greatly influenced the world, both culturally and politically. According to one historian, the Pharaohs over the course of time could be divided into roughly thirty dynasties, indicating the rich and lasting effects the country had on the history of the world.

During the seven years of plenty, the Nile River likely provided water for the crops so that there was more than enough for the people to enjoy. The Nile also provided a good route to travel along for trading purposes.



Understanding Your Students

Forgiveness is a hard thing to do, even for young children. One thing we can do is set the example for them to follow. When we make a mistake, lose our temper, or fail to meet one of our responsibilities that involves a student, make an obvious point of apologizing to the child and asking his forgiveness. Strive to be viewed by your children not as one who is perfect but as one who is really trying to do better. To reinforce the concept of the importance of forgiveness, you could try the following activity after the lesson.

Sun and Cloud Game--This will help your children see that they can make themselves happy or miserable depending on their ability to forgive. Cut a yellow sun and a black cloud out of construction paper, along with two stick men or figures labeled "Billy" and

"Eddy." Set Billy and Eddy on a table or on the floor and tell the following situations. Have the children put the sun over the head of the child who will be made happy by his actions and the cloud over the child whose situations will make him sad.

1. A boy tricks Eddy at school. Eddy is mad at the boy all day and looks for a way to get even.
2. Billy's sister borrows some of his coloring pencils. Billy notices that she is using his pencils without permission. She apologizes and says she won't do it again. Billy says, "It's okay."
3. Eddy gets hit in the back by a ball another boy throws. It hurts for a minute and Eddy feels mad. But then he feels better and tells the other boy he's okay. He knows he didn't mean to do it.

You may wish to add other examples. It is important to stress that forgiveness is something God wants us to do as you talk about these situations.



Vocabulary

Famine

when there is no food to eat, usually because there is no rain so crops can't grow

Governor

someone who is in charge of the land

Spy

to watch someone in secret

Forgive

when you stop being angry at someone for what they did



Before You Teach

Joseph was truly the model of forgiveness. Even though he was sold, enslaved, wrongly accused and imprisoned, he did not hate his brothers. When they finally met again a decade later, he completely forgave them from the bottom of his heart.

In the New Testament, Peter asked Jesus Christ how many times a person should forgive another (Mt 18:21). In fact, by stating the number seven, Peter already thought he was especially generous. But Jesus reminded him that it was not true forgiveness if we kept count. By keeping track, it indicates that we are still thinking about the wrongs. Forgiveness, like that of Joseph's, involves com-

pletely letting go of the other's wrongdoing. Joseph did not constantly remind his brothers of what they did. He could have used it to wield power over them, or at the very least, cause them to feel bitter and remorseful for the rest of their lives. But he did not do any of this. Joseph truly forgave them because of their repentant hearts. After saying he forgave them and inviting them to be a part of the family again, the past remained in the past.

Moreover, God has forgiven all of our sins. This grace has been freely given to us. When we see how much God loves us, sending His Son to die on the cross to redeem us, we can only do the same and forgive those who have hurt us.



Bible Story

Joseph Works For Pharaoh

In the last lesson, we learned that Joseph became a great helper to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Joseph told the king what his dreams meant. There would be seven good years of harvest and then seven years of famine, where nothing would grow. After hearing Joseph, Pharaoh put him in charge of storing all the food. That way, when the famine came after the seven good years of harvest, there would be enough food for everyone.

So Joseph worked very hard for seven years. Just like the dreams Pharaoh had, there was plenty of food for everyone during those seven years. There was so much food that Joseph had to put the extra in special barns so that they could be locked up and kept for times when there would be no more food to eat. And after seven years of plentiful harvest, the famine came all over the land. A famine is when everyone is hungry because there is no grain or vegetables growing. There was probably no rain so it was hard for grains and vegetables to grow. But because Joseph had already stored extra food in all those barns, the people could come to the barns and buy the grain and food to cook and eat. Even though there was not as much to eat as before, the people in Egypt did not have to go hungry.

Joseph's Brothers Come to Buy Grain

Egypt was not the only place where there was no food. Joseph's homeland, which was Canaan, also had a great famine. There was not much food for people to eat there. So Joseph's relatives were hungry. Then they heard that there was grain to buy in Egypt. Joseph's father, Jacob, told Joseph's ten older brothers (the youngest one stayed home) to go to Egypt to buy some grain. The brothers listened to their father, gathered the money and journeyed to Egypt.

Now remember that Joseph was in charge of the grain. He was the governor. A governor is someone who is powerful. Each day, many people came from all over the land to buy grain from the storehouses. And each day, Joseph would look after the storehouses to make sure that everyone got what they needed and would not go hungry.

One day, someone came to tell Joseph that ten people had come to buy some grain. When Joseph went out to see them, Joseph thought they looked very familiar. As he walked closer, Joseph couldn't believe his eyes. They were his ten older brothers! But the brothers did not know that the governor of Egypt was their very own brother, the one they had sold many years ago. They did not recognize him. Now, as the governor of Egypt, Joseph was wearing important looking clothes. He wasn't dressed as a shepherd or as a slave anymore.

When the brothers saw Joseph, they bowed down before him. That was a way to show the governor that they were friendly people who just wanted to buy some grain. Even though Joseph knew who they were, he pretended not to know them. He wasn't sure if they would still hate him and want to get rid of him if he told them who he was.

He said to them, "Where do you come from?"

The brothers answered, "We come from the land of Canaan to buy food."

Joseph wanted to test them some more, so he said, "How can I believe you are only here to buy grain? What if you are spies?"

"We are not spies," the brothers cried out. "We are honest people. We are from a family of 12 brothers. One is no longer with us. The youngest one is still at home with our father. Please believe us."

"I will believe you if you bring your youngest brother here to see me. Then I will know you are telling me the truth about your family," said Joseph.

Joseph told his servants to give his brothers the grain they needed. He also gave them other things they needed for their journey back home. Even though Joseph's brothers had sold him a long time ago, he was not mad at them now. He wanted to help them. He knew that God had made him the governor of Egypt so that he could help the people and his family during this time of famine, so that no one would have to go hungry.

The Brothers Come Again to Buy Grain

So the brothers took the grain home and told their father everything that had happened. The grain they brought home did not last them too long. After a while, the food ran out and they were hungry again. Jacob told them to go back to Egypt

to buy some more.

One of the brothers said, "But the governor said to us that unless we bring our youngest brother back with us, he will not believe us and sell us any more grain."

So Jacob gave the brothers the money and allowed the youngest brother, Benjamin, to go with them back to Egypt. When the brothers went to see Joseph, he was very happy. He was happy because he saw his youngest brother. He was so happy that he told his servants to take his brothers to his house and prepare a good lunch for them to eat.

Joseph Tells His Brothers Who He Is

When the brothers were taken to the governor's house, they became afraid. They didn't know what the governor wanted with them. Usually, people who come to buy grain don't get to eat with the governor. They didn't know that the governor was their brother. When the lunch was ready, Joseph came in to eat with them.

"How is your father?" asked Joseph.

"He is fine," answered the brothers.

"Is this your youngest brother, the one I asked you to bring?" Joseph asked as he looked at Benjamin.

"Yes," the brothers replied. When Joseph heard their answers, he was so glad that everyone in his family was fine, he had to get up and go to another room to cry. Then he washed his face, came back and had lunch with them. After spending a lot of time talking to his brothers, he knew that what they were saying was true and he wanted them to know who he was, so he sent his servants out of the room.

After everyone had left, Joseph said, "Look at me. I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold many

years ago. I am still alive!"

The brothers could not believe their eyes and ears. How could Joseph be the governor of Egypt? Wasn't he just a slave when they sold him? Then they became scared because he was powerful now. What would he do to them now since they had been so mean to him years ago?

But Joseph continued to speak, "Don't be afraid and don't be angry with yourselves. Even though you sold me as a slave, God used it in a special way so that I can help people now. Besides, God has taken care of me the whole time I have been here in Egypt."

Then he hugged his brothers.

"Hurry and go home. Bring my father here so that we may all live together again. There is plenty of food here for everyone."

Joseph Forgives His Older Brothers

The brothers still couldn't believe it. Their brother was alive! They quickly journeyed home and told Jacob, their father, everything that had happened. Jacob was happy that all his sons were okay. So he listened to Joseph and traveled to Egypt. Joseph's whole family stayed in Egypt with Joseph from then on and they were happy because they could be together again.

But the most important thing we learned is that Joseph forgave his brothers. He could have stayed mad at them for selling him many years ago. He could have refused to sell them grain. Then they would go hungry and probably die. But Joseph did not do that. He loved his family. He also knew God let certain things happen to him so that he could help the people like this one day. He thanked God for always taking care of him and his family.



Check For Understanding

1. **What was Joseph's job when he was the governor?** (He stored the extra food away. When the famine came, he sold the grain to people who needed them.)
2. **Did Joseph's brothers recognize him when they came to buy grain?** (No.)

3. **Why did Joseph want his brothers to bring back his brother, Benjamin?** (He missed him a lot.)
4. **Was Joseph mad at his brothers when he told them who he was?** (No. He was happy because everyone in his family was okay. Plus, he knew God had put him in Egypt so that he could help the people.)
5. **Why were Joseph's brothers afraid when**

they learned who he was? (They were scared because they knew they had treated him terribly before. Now Joseph was a powerful governor. He could have done horrible things to them.)

6. **What did Joseph do in the end?** (He forgave

his brothers and even told them to move to Egypt where he could take care of them.)

7. **What does it mean to forgive someone? Can you think of any examples?** (Allow students to answer.)



Life Application Story

"I Forgive You!"

Ricky Lopez and his friend David were bored during recess. They didn't have anything they really wanted to do. Then suddenly, Ricky spotted a ball on the playground.

"Hey," said Ricky, "let's play ball." David thought that was a good idea and they ran over and picked up the ball. Ricky and David had only been playing for a few minutes when suddenly, Brian, another classmate, cut in front of Ricky and grabbed the ball while it was still bouncing. Ricky couldn't believe someone could be so rude.

He chased after Brian yelling, "Give the ball back to me! You are not supposed to grab the ball when everyone is playing with it!"

"Why shouldn't I?" Brian yelled back. "You should not have taken my ball without asking me first," Brian said, almost out of breath.

"How do we know it's your ball?" said David.

Brian stopped long enough to show the boys the side of the ball with his name on it.

"There, does that prove it to you now?" screamed Brian as he began to run away with the ball.

"We thought the ball belonged to the school. We didn't know that the ball belonged to you," Ricky explained. "Besides, it was rude of you to just grab it like that. You could have at least asked to see if it was yours."

While Ricky was shouting at Brian, Brian ran further and further away. But he was running backwards and couldn't really see where he was going.

"Yah, whatever!" Brian shouted back to Ricky as he turned his body around to face the right way. Then he tripped and fell and scraped his knee. There was a lot of blood.

"Ouch! That hurts!" Brian yelled.

Ricky and David quickly ran over.

"Are you okay, Brian? I am sorry. I shouldn't have chased you or taken your ball. Honestly, I thought the ball was the school's!"

"That's all right, Ricky, I forgive you. I know you didn't know the ball belonged to me. I'm sorry, too. If I hadn't taken the ball while you guys were still playing, you wouldn't have been angry and chased after me," Brian apologized.

Ricky nodded his head and said, "Yeah, if I hadn't chased you, you wouldn't have tripped and fell. It looks like you are bleeding pretty bad. Let me help you to get up and go to the nurse's office to get your wound patched up."

"Thanks, Ricky," said Brian, as they headed towards the doors.

Questions to Think About

1. **Why did Brian grab the ball from Ricky and David?** (The ball was his and he wanted it back.) How did Brian fall? (He wasn't looking where he was going and tripped.)
2. **What did David say to Brian as he ran over to help him up?** (He apologized for taking the ball and chasing him.)
3. **What did Brian say back to Ricky?** (He forgave him for taking the ball and also apologized for grabbing it away.)
4. **What did the two boys do that makes Jesus Christ happy?** (Allow students to answer. They forgave each other. They did not stay mad over the ball. They helped each other out.)
5. **Has anyone done something that made you feel very upset or mad? Did you try to get even? Why is it wrong to try to get even with someone who hurt you?** (Allow students to respond.)



Activity 1

Joseph's Story

Look at the pictures. Color them. Then cut them out and put them in the right order. (Provide blank paper for students.) Review the story again from the beginning. What was your favorite part of Joseph's story?



Activity 2

How Can I Forgive?

Look at each picture. Someone has done something to hurt another. What can that person do to forgive? Help the students write "forgive."



Activity 3

Forgiving Heart Baskets

Materials:

1. red (or pink) construction paper
2. yarn
3. stickers
4. hole punch
5. scissors
6. markers



Directions:

1. Give each student two sheets of construction paper (the hearts should already be pre-drawn onto each sheet).
2. Help the students cut along the lines so they will each have two hearts.
3. Stack the hearts and punch holes along the edges. Be sure they are not too close to the edges so that the paper will tear.
4. Provide each student with a piece of yarn (about 2 feet long, depending on the size of the heart). Tape one end of the yarn so it becomes like a needle point. Take the taped end and guide the students to string the yarn through the holes. Make sure there is enough yarn left at the top for the handle.
5. Tie the yarn at the top to make a handle. Using

the stickers or markers, the students can decorate their forgiving heart.

6. As the students are creating this craft, be sure to talk about some of the following questions:
 - *How does it feel when someone hurts another person?
 - *What do you think God wants us to do when someone hurts us?
 - *Joseph could have hated his brothers but he forgave them. God wants us to have a forgiving heart too. Help students to understand that the heart craft can remind them of what God wants them to do.



Optional Activity

Family Photo Albums

Materials:

1. 8 1/2 x 11 inch white paper (six per student)
2. 9 x 12 inch construction paper
3. glue stick
4. hole punch
5. ribbon or yarn
6. crayons or markers

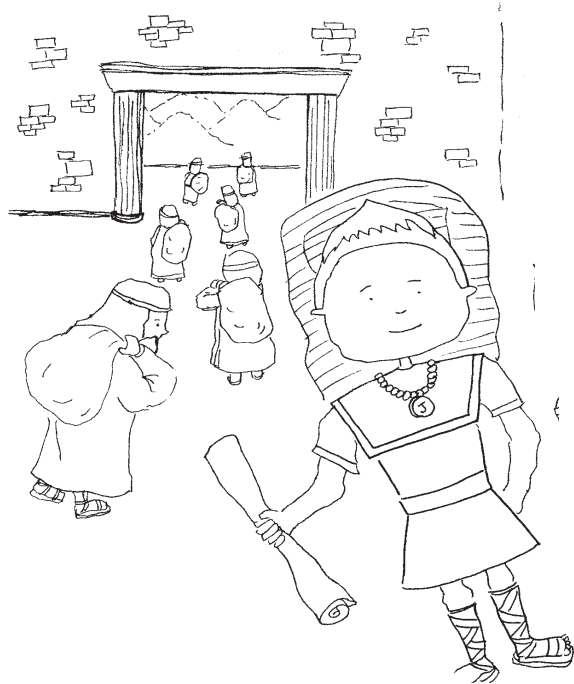
Directions:

1. Give each student six sheets of white paper and six sheets of construction paper. Have students glue each white paper onto a separate piece of construction paper (to make the pages more sturdy). Remind the students to just put glue along the edges so that the drying glue will not affect their drawings.
2. Line up the six pages and hole punch them along the left edge (3 or 4 holes). String yarn or ribbon to secure the pages. (The pages could also be stapled together.)
3. Write "My Family" on the cover and the student's name.
4. Guide the students to use the remaining pages to draw pictures of their family members.
5. As the students are drawing, discuss some of the following questions:
 - *Who are the people in your family?
 - *How do you think God wants us to treat our family?
 - *Joseph wanted his whole family to be together in the end. This is what God wants. He wants us to be loving and kind to everyone in our family. He wants us to get along.

Activity 3:1

Joseph's Story

Look at the pictures. Color them. Then cut them out and put them in the right order. Review the story again from the beginning. What was your favorite part of Joseph's story?



Activity 3:2

How Can I Forgive?

Look at each picture.
Someone has done something to hurt another.
What can that person do to forgive?



1. Tom tore the pages of John's book.
What can John do to forgive Tom? He could say, "I _____ you."



2. Shelly broke Susan's glasses.
What can Susan do to forgive Shelly? She could say, "I _____ you."



3. Jimmy took Wilson's pencil without asking him. What can Wilson say to Jimmy? He could say, "I _____ you."