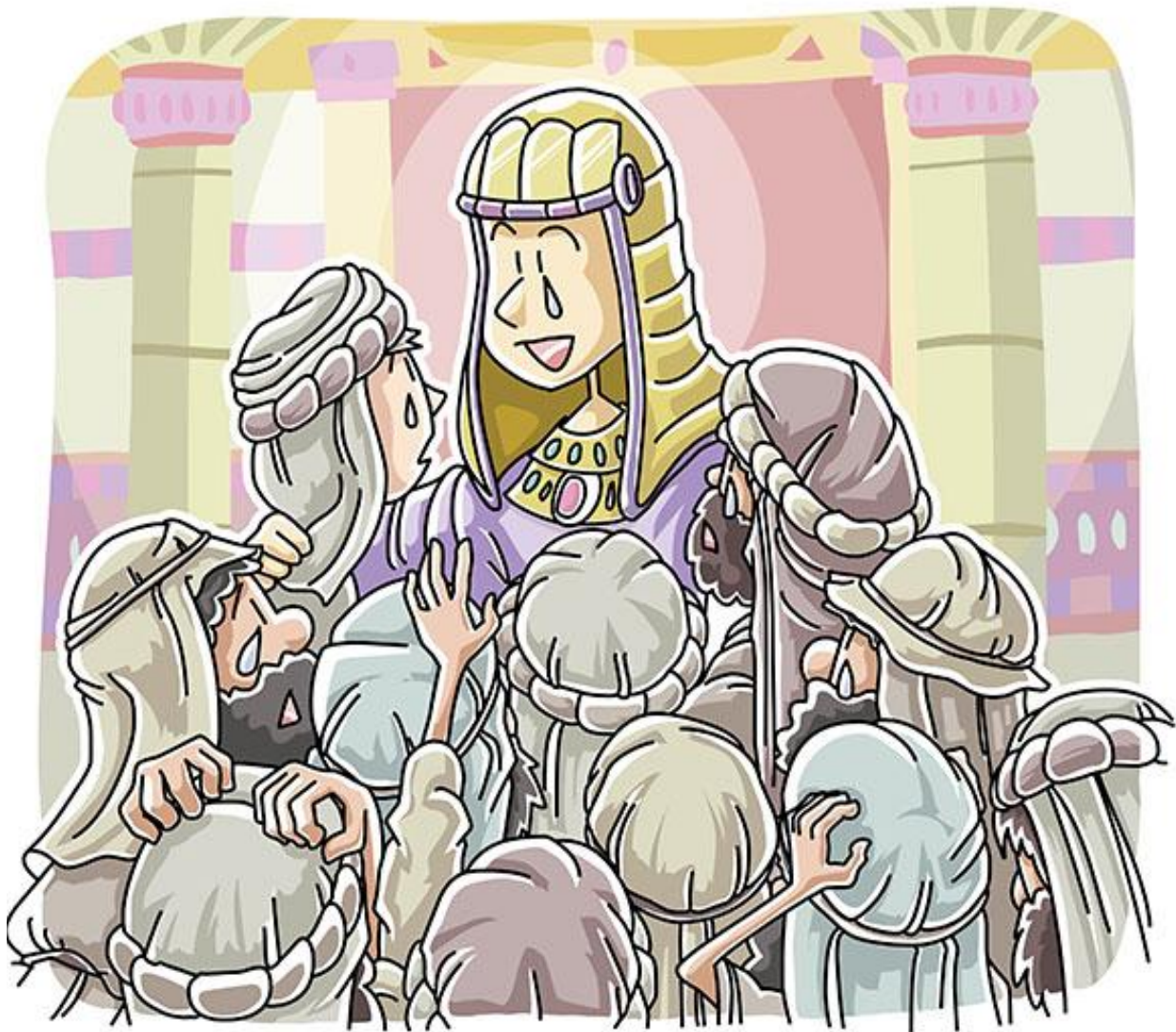


God Has a Plan!

The Story of Joseph

Genesis 45:1-15 & 50:19-21 *NIV*

Bible Lesson & Activities for Children



THE **SUNDAY SCHOOL** STORE

God Means it for Good...



Many times in our lives, things happen that are difficult to understand. We might face difficulties or uncertainties and wonder what God's plan is, or why He would allow us to suffer. The story of Joseph is a great reminder that God is always with us and has a plan that will bless us. We can trust that He is at work and will provide. Even confusing and troubling situations can be a gift when we know that He works for our good.

God gives us what we need. He loves each and every one of us, and He has a special plan for every step of our lives! It can be frustrating when we don't know what is up ahead, but we rest knowing that God holds the future. We might go through hard things, but they work together for God's purposes. Most importantly, we know that God has given us Jesus, who provides Eternal Life and salvation. Even if things don't work out as we might want now, a Heavenly home awaits us someday!

Passage: Genesis 45:1-15 and 50:19-21 (also using references to Genesis 37 and 38-44)

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade

Materials Needed: Construction paper; decorative supplies; glue; markers or crayons; tape; scissors; cotton; stickers; gift packages and boxes; jigsaw puzzles; Bibles.

More Resources Online

- Watch the [video demonstration of the object lesson](#).
- Watch the [video example for the craft projects](#).
- Watch the [video Bible story "Joseph Forgives"](#) from Saddleback Kids Club
- Watch the [video Bible Bible story "God's Story: Joseph"](#) from Crossroads Kids
- For more free illustrations, visit [Christian Clip Arts](#) and [Ministry-To-Children](#)

Object Lesson (5 minutes)

Greet children and offer a "present" of sorts...

Hello, children of God!

You know, I care about you, and I think it would be nice to give you a special treat. Would you like that? I have something for you inside here... *Pass the box to children and have them open it. Have several layers, bags, and boxes for them to work through. If you have time, the more boxes, the better! In the last one, have some sort of prize or treat you can pass around after the message.*

Wow, it sure took a lot to get down to that prize, didn't it? You might have been wondering why in the world I made you go through all of those boxes and bags. It could have been a lot easier if I just handed you the treat, right? Why so much challenge? Well, sometimes life is like this, in a way. There are things that we go through that might be difficult or confusing. We might wonder what is coming up next, or why certain things are happening to us. It's important to know that there is a purpose in all of it, even the hard things. We don't always understand right away what that is, but God has a special plan for us. He is working everything according to His plans and timing.

This reminds me of a character in the Bible. His name was Joseph, and he went through some really tough things. *Feel free to add or take away from the synopsis, according to audience and time.* Joseph had eleven brothers, and they didn't always get along too well. In fact, his brothers were jealous of him and angry at him, because he was their father's favorite son. They hated him so much that they wanted to kill him! They threw him in a well and then sold him into slavery in Egypt. But God was with him! While in Egypt, he went to work for a man named Potiphar, who liked him and put him in charge of his whole

household. Unfortunately, Joseph got into trouble because Potiphar's wife did something sneaky, and then he went to jail. But God was with him! Even in jail, Joseph was admired and did great things. He finally got out of jail because Pharaoh, who was in charge of all Egypt, needed his help. God allowed Joseph to interpret dreams and let Pharaoh know a famine (food shortage) was coming. Because of Joseph and the ability God gave him, the people saved up enough food to get through the famine.

Well, eventually, Joseph's brothers were impacted by the lack of food, too, and they came to Egypt to ask for help. They didn't realize right away that their brother was the guy in charge! After a series of events involving some back and forth Egypt trips, Joseph finally revealed his identity. He could have been angry and wanted revenge against his family, but he chose to forgive them. He even reassured them, saying that everything that happened was part of God's plan. They wanted to harm Joseph, but God was with him and had a purpose for everything he went through. God took a bad thing and made it good, because Joseph was able to save not only his family, but many others. Everything happened for a reason!

God has a plan for our lives, too. We might not understand now what that could be, but we know that God loves us and wants what is best for us. We can trust Him to take care of us and provide blessings. Even when it feels as though we are unwrapping layer after layer of confusing boxes, God has reasons for what happens in our lives. And even if things in our lives now don't improve right away, we know that He has provided us with Jesus, the greatest blessing imaginable. Because of His life, death, and resurrection, we will have new life someday, even when we die. That is a treasure worth waiting for and celebrating!

Prayer: (Invite the children to repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for having a plan for our lives.

Help us to trust in You

Even when we don't understand what's happening.

You are mighty and wonderful!

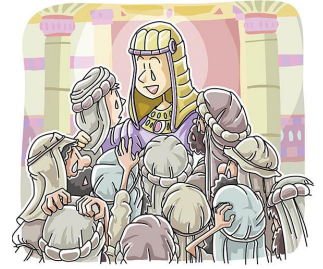
Thank you for your love.

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

Game & Activities Suggestions

(10 minutes)

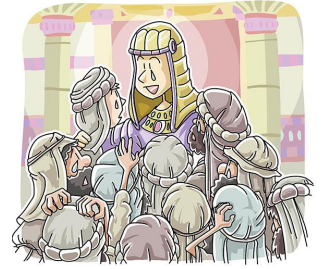


This story is a wonderful picture of God’s providence and purposeful plans for our lives. The narrative of Joseph and his brothers also reminds us of the importance of forgiveness and mercy. To get students thinking and ready to learn, consider an activity opener along these lines:

- Jail tag: Recall Joseph’s stint in prison with a round of “jail tag,” similar to capture the flag. Split a large play area into two portions, and designate a part of each half to be “jail.” Students will try to retrieve an item from the opposing team, but if they are tagged, they must go to “jail.” Another member of the same team can create a “prison break” by tagging teammates who have gone to jail.
- Pin the coat on Joseph: Play “Pin the Tail on the Donkey,” using a large picture of a person (Joseph). Have students attempt to navigate, blindfolded, to the image, and place a paper coat cut-out or colorful strips of paper onto the figure.
- Chain of many colors: Pass out strips of paper to students, in various colors. Have students take turns describing a challenging event in their lives, and stapling their papers together as they do so. In the end, this will link the hard events into a colorful chain, showing how life’s events come together to make a complete picture!
- Backpack relay: Have students line up and compete in a relay race where the runners wear backpacks. One line will have an empty pack, and the other will have one full of heavy items. If time allows, have each team race with both packs. Compare the difficulty of carrying the loaded backpack. Explain that forgiveness is like letting go of a heavy load, and when we forgive (as Joseph did), it lightens our burdens as well as those of others.
- Puzzle it out: Have teams of students race to put jigsaw puzzles together, but at first, withhold the image of the completed puzzle. Explain that life can sometimes be hard to understand, but God has a big picture planned!
- Dream it up: Discuss strange dreams in honor of the dreams in the story.

Explain to students that the story will feature sibling rivalry, challenging times, and forgiveness, all to demonstrate God’s faithfulness, love, and purposes in our lives.

Main Bible Teaching (15 minutes)



The story of Joseph takes up quite a lot of space, occupying thirteen of the fifty chapters of Genesis. Depending on timing and audience, this lesson might be best broken into a “two-parter”, but is given as one here. Select which passages seem best to highlight for students, filling in parts with explanation or paraphrase. You could also dramatize things by having students act out parts. For younger students, read a simplified or story book version.

Genesis 37:2-4 NIV *Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. (3) Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. (4) When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.*

Start the story by setting the stage to describe Joseph’s background. You might need to review a bit about Jacob and his sons, if students are not already familiar with that story. Explain that Israel, in this case, refers to the person of Jacob, and that Joseph was the second-youngest of his twelve sons. Jacob loved Joseph the most, and even gave him a special coat. This did not go over too well with the other brothers, of course, who were jealous and angry over his lofty position with their father.

*You might go into the element of Joseph’s prophetic dreams about his family bowing to him, depending on how much time and detail you wish to cover.

Ask: Do you ever argue or fight with your siblings? What kinds of things do you disagree about? Hopefully you get along better than Joseph and his brothers did!

Genesis 37:26–28 NIV Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? (27) Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed. (28) So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

Joseph’s brothers were so mad, they decided to kill him! They were going to attack him and do it right away, but Reuben (the oldest) convinced them to throw him in a well instead (he planned to go back and save him later). However, they decided to sell him as a slave and make some side money instead. Joseph was bought as a slave and taken away to work and live in Egypt.

Ask: How would you feel if you were suddenly taken to live in a new and strange land? What would you do if you were Joseph?

Genesis 39:1–5 NIV Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. (2) The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. (3) When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, (4) Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. (5) From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of

Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.

Explain that we see an important pattern in the story of Joseph, which emerges here. Everything that Joseph did had success, because the Lord was with him. The people Joseph worked for noticed that he was a quality man and worker, and Joseph quickly rose to power in the positions he occupied. God's blessings were on Joseph wherever he went, even in tough situations. In this case, Joseph was in a strange country, but the Lord blessed him and his master put him in charge of all that he had. Unfortunately, though, there was trouble for Joseph...

Ask: Have you ever had a hard situation that turned into something positive? How can we make the most of any area we find ourselves in?

Genesis 39:20–23 NIV *And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. (21) But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. (22) And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. (23) The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.*

Joseph found himself stuck again. From the pit of a well to the peak of the household, Joseph wound up back in a pit, this time in prison. Potiphar (Joseph's master) had a wife who tried to trick Joseph (you don't have to go into too much detail with that part, for younger audiences), and as a result, Potiphar became angry and put Joseph in prison. Our pattern continues, though, because the Lord was with Joseph still, even in prison! The

jailkeeper noticed how faithful Joseph was, and put him in charge of the whole prison. Jail does not sound like an ideal place for job advancement, but Joseph seemed to make the best out of whatever situation God placed him in! Even in prison, God was with him and helping things improve for him.

Ask: If you could be put in charge of something, what would you want to control?

Genesis 41:38-40 NIV *So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" (39) Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. (40) You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."*

You will need to do a little summarizing to cover some of the action in this part of the narrative. Explain that, while in prison, Joseph interpreted dreams and helped a fellow prisoner as a result. As soon as the other man was out of jail, though, he forgot all about Joseph. That is, until Pharaoh (the mighty ruler of Egypt) had some troubling dreams of his own, and was looking for someone who could help him understand them. The other man finally remembered Joseph and recommended him.

Joseph was able to warn Pharaoh that his dreams told of things to come: there would be seven years of plentiful food, followed by seven years of famine where everyone would be hungry and in need. Joseph suggested finding someone who could help organize people to save food during the good times and be prepared for the tough times. Pharaoh was so impressed that he asked Joseph to be the one to lead this charge. He put Joseph in command, sort of a "Vice Pharaoh" to take care of things, outranked only by Pharaoh himself. Talk about an upgrade! Joseph went from being a slave to being the second most powerful man in Egypt!

And things happened just as he had predicted. There were seven years of great crops, followed by seven years of famine. In fact, everyone ran out of food, all over the world. It even impacted Joseph's family. When they heard there was food in Egypt, they decided to go check it out.

Genesis 42:1-3 NIV *When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" (2) He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die." (3) Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt.*

Ask: If someone did something horrible to you, would you want revenge? If you were Joseph, do you think you would want to get revenge on your brothers?

Jacob instructed his sons to go ask for food in Egypt, which seemed to be the only way to avoid starvation. They were living in Canaan, which was about 200 miles from Egypt, They didn't have planes, trains, or automobiles then, so the brothers had to make that long journey on foot (maybe bringing along some animals), which would have taken quite a long time.

Here the story gets interesting. Read through or summarize as much of the back and forth action as desired. Joseph recognized his brothers when they came to him, but he didn't let on at first. He accused them of being spies, and sent the back to Canaan to retrieve the youngest brother, Benjamin. Meanwhile, he gave them food and even returned the money they brought to pay for it. When they came back (remember, this is a 400 mile round-trip journey), he threatened to put all of them in jail for stealing from him. Maybe this was his act of getting to them just a little, for all that they had done.

Finally, though, Joseph revealed himself.

Genesis 45:4-11 NIV Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! (5) And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. (6) For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. (7) But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. (8) “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. (9) Now hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don’t delay. (10) You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. (11) I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.’

It must have been tough for the brothers to believe this could really be Joseph, whom they had sold into slavery. Joseph was not vengeful or angry, though, even though he could justifiably have been so. Instead, he told his brothers that he would take care of them. He invited them to come stay in Egypt to have food and safety. He knew that God had a plan and purpose in what happened, using even the actions they had inflicted on him to ultimately bring about good.

Genesis 50:19-21 NIV But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? (20) You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. (21) So then, don’t be afraid. I will

provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

When Jacob died, the brothers worried that Joseph would decide to have his revenge then, without their father in the way. Joseph again reassured them, though. This final portion of the book of Genesis reminds us of something very important about God. He is always with us, and He has a plan to work things for our good. Even though Joseph’s brothers had ill intentions in mind when they sold him, God transformed the situation. In all of the events of Joseph’s life, He was with him and helped him. God brought good into the situation and used Joseph’s captivity to save not only his family, but many others!

If time allows, you might also incorporate some of the ways that Joseph’s story relates to Jesus. For instance, both were sold for the price of a slave, wrongfully accused, spent time in Egypt, forgave their enemies, and ultimately saved people!

Close with prayer, thanking God for being with us and having a plan and purpose for our lives.

Craft Activities (15 minutes)

Joseph went through a lot. Through his story, we see how God is always at work in our lives, even when things get tough. The story of Joseph also lends itself to some fun creative projects! Here are a couple of ideas to celebrate the Genesis narrative. A “Pop-out Postcard from Prison” includes elements of different parts of the story. And no Joseph lesson would be complete without a vibrant “Colorful Coat Mosaic.” This one doubles as a memory verse aid! Let’s get crafty

Craft one: "Pop-out Prison Postcard"

You will need:

- Markers or crayons
- Construction paper/cardstock
- Scissors
- Glue, tape, and/or staples
- Extra themed decorations: cotton balls, stickers, etc.



Procedure:

1. On a large piece of paper or cardstock, prepare a scene of elements related to the Joseph story. Use cut paper images, extra decorations, and props to recall parts of the narrative ("clouds" for dreams, stickers, corn, etc.).
2. Add verses and captions as desired.
3. On another piece of paper, cut out several slits to look like jail bars. Add more verses and captions.
4. Staple the papers together to create a "jail scene" to recount the story.



Craft Two: "Colorful Coat Mosaic"

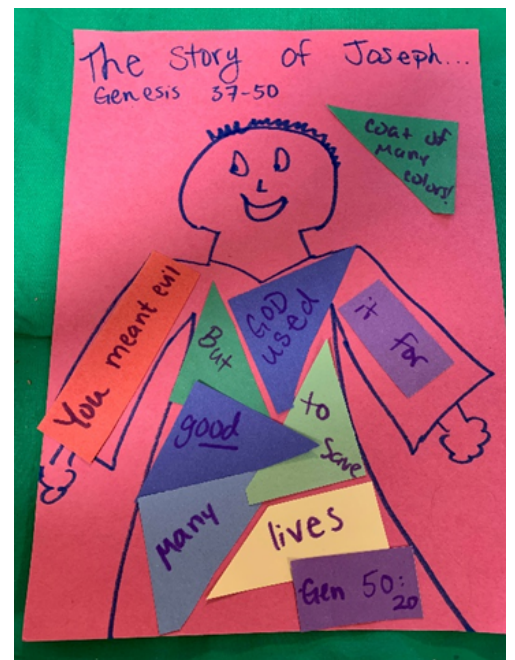
You will need:

- Construction paper or cardstock (varied colors)
- Markers or crayons
- Glue or tape
- Scissors
- Extra decorations as desired



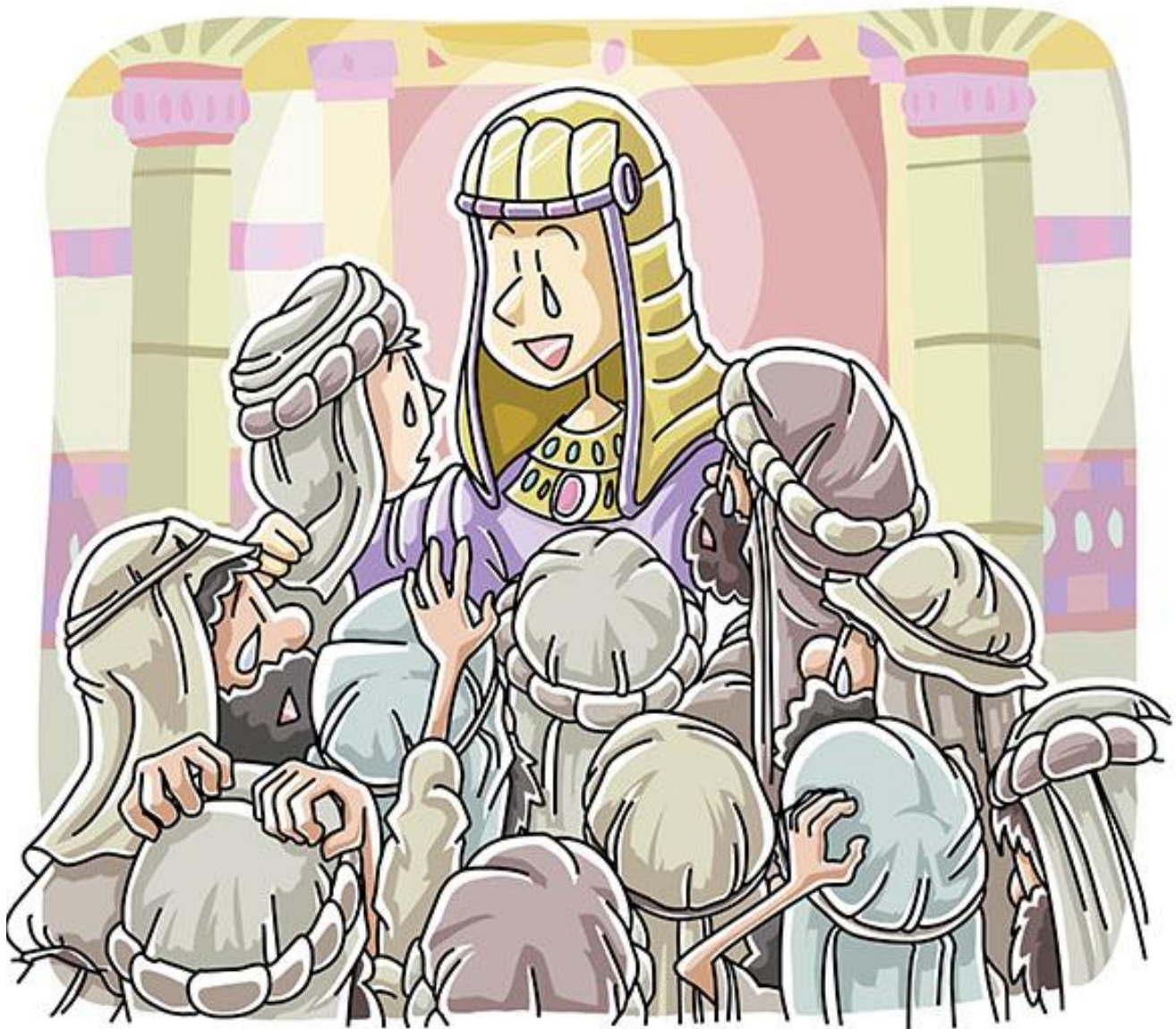
Procedure:

1. Draw a large person on a piece of paper, to represent Joseph.
2. Cut colorful paper into various shapes and colors.
3. On each piece of paper, write a portion of a memory verse. If time allows, rearrange the pieces to practice the verse.
4. Glue the verse pieces onto the Joseph figure. Add extra captions as desired.



Genesis 45:4 NIV

Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!”





Word Search Puzzle

Joseph - Israel - Pharaoh - Egypt - Benjamin - Goshen

Brothers - Household - Lord - Famine - Wheat - Deliverance

D O E G Y P T D O Q L
A L K O J O S E P H F
H O U S E H O L D B G
D R Z H U Z Y I R M V
P D I E T R A V U X Y
U F S N P W H E A T A
I M R H P H A R O A H
U Z A B E N J A M I N
N Y E F A M I N E D C
I B L V D V K C X S N
I B B R O T H E R S P

Word Search Answers

D	O	E	G	Y	P	T	D	O	Q	L
A	L	K	O	J	O	S	E	P	H	F
H	O	U	S	E	H	O	L	D	B	G
D	R	Z	H	U	Z	Y	I	R	M	V
P	D	I	E	T	R	A	V	U	X	Y
U	F	S	N	P	W	H	E	A	T	A
I	M	R	H	P	H	A	R	O	A	H
U	Z	A	B	E	N	J	A	M	I	N
N	Y	E	F	A	M	I	N	E	D	C
I	B	L	V	D	V	K	C	X	S	N
I	B	B	R	O	T	H	E	R	S	P