

Joseph Forgives His Brothers

Genesis 42–45



Worship Theme:



We can honor God by forgiving others.

Weaving Faith Into Life:



Children will worship God for his forgiveness and forgive others in the same way.

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
1 Let's Praise God! <i>(about 25 minutes)</i>	Sing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The Lord Is Merciful" (Psalm 145:8) • "He Is Good" (Nahum 1:7) • "No Matter How I Feel" • "Light of the World" • "My Hope Is in the Lord" • "His Love Endures Forever" (Psalm 100:4-5) 	KidsOwn Worship Kit: <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> Classroom Supplies: Video equipment, brownies, napkins

Preschool

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
2 Let's Learn the Point! <i>(about 25 minutes)</i>	Gift-Wrapped Forgiveness Make "gifts" of forgiveness.	Classroom Supplies: Tissue and 6-inch ribbon for each child
	Joseph Forgives Review the story of Joseph's forgiveness.	Classroom Supplies: 8 cans of food
	Circle of Forgiveness Game Help one another receive forgiveness.	KidsOwn Worship Kit: <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> Classroom Supplies: Video equipment, masking tape

Elementary

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
2 Let's Learn the Point! <i>(about 25 minutes)</i>	* The Joseph Comic Strip Make frames for a Bible story comic strip.	Classroom Supplies: Bibles, markers, 4 sheets of poster board
	* Joseph Forgives Hear the Bible story, and explain the comic strip.	Classroom Supplies: Posters from "The Joseph Comic Strip," tape
	* Paid in Full Have their hands stamped as a reminder that they need to forgive as they have been forgiven.	Classroom Supplies: "Paid in Full" stamp, stamp pad

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
3 Let's Pray! <i>(about 10 minutes)</i>	The Offering Make a promise to God as they pass the offering bowls.	Classroom Supplies: Offering bowls
	Prayer in Motion Take part in a prayer with motions.	
	Prayer Whispers Whisper the name of someone they'll forgive as a prayer in God's ear.	

* Starred activities can be used successfully with preschool and elementary children together.

Customize your session to fit your needs. You can separate preschoolers and elementary children for Section 2.

Or, if you keep the children all together for the entire worship session, we suggest you choose from the starred activities.

Joseph Forgives His Brothers

Genesis 42–45

Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams was correct, and the seven years of abundance in Egypt were followed by seven years of famine. Jacob's question in Genesis 42:1 demonstrates the desperation of his family's situation. Apparently all other options had been exhausted. Without food from Egypt, Jacob and his family would starve. So 10 sons went to Egypt. However, Benjamin, the youngest, stayed home. With Joseph gone, Benjamin was the only tie Jacob still had to his beloved Rachel, who had died at Benjamin's birth (Genesis 35:16-18). Jacob didn't want to risk losing Benjamin, too.

One might think that the brothers would have recognized Joseph when they first saw him. However, it had been over 20 years since they had seen him, and Joseph was a young man when he was sold into slavery. Besides the maturity he had gained, he was also no doubt dressed as Egyptian royalty. And even if the brothers had noticed a resemblance, they would quickly have rejected any notion that the slave they had sold to the Midianites could have become a ruler in Egypt.

Why did Joseph put his brothers through all the testing and struggle? To do it out of revenge would have been out of character for the Joseph described elsewhere in Scripture. Instead, he likely did it to help the brothers come to terms with their guilt for what they had done to him. He may also have wanted to see if they had changed their way of treating others. When Judah offered himself in Benjamin's place to protect Benjamin and save his father from further grief, Joseph apparently saw that he had accomplished his purpose. The brothers regretted what they had done and truly cared about Benjamin and Jacob.

When Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, their terror was justified. They remembered all too vividly what they had done to their brother. They knew what Joseph had put them through already. They saw the power Joseph wielded throughout Egypt. Certainly they feared for their very lives! However, Joseph's message was one of forgiveness, not revenge. In spite of the difficulties Joseph had undergone, he realized that God had sent him to Egypt for a purpose. Joseph knew that his dreams were coming true as his brothers bowed to him, but instead of lording his power over them, he saved their lives from the famine that would have killed them. Not only did Joseph send food, but Pharaoh also sent carts and provisions so that all of Joseph's family could come to Egypt. Joseph could better care for them there, in the fertile land of Goshen, than far away in the land of Canaan.

Devotion for Leaders

As Christians growing in relationship with Jesus, we enjoy the protection and promises of a loving God. Therefore, it's necessary and natural that we forgive those who hurt or offend us.

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: As servants in God's kingdom, it's important that we forgive those who wrong us. Are you suffering from an offense or struggling to forgive someone? Consider the trial that Joseph endured. Reread his story, and ask God to give you the same strength and wisdom he gave Joseph.

Why We Worship for Leaders

Although we are made in God's image, his ways are so much higher than ours. We say to each other, "You want something from me? You give me something in return." He says to us, "You've received something from me? Give it away to someone else." God forgives us even though we let him down again and again, and he asks that we offer that same forgiveness to the people who cross our paths every day.

It's not often easy. We don't forgive people because they deserve it, even though sometimes they do. We don't forgive because we'll feel better, even though sometimes we do. We forgive because God tells us to and we honor him when we forgive. One of our greatest acts of worship may be to give someone a break, to offer another chance, to forget a debt, or to wipe a slate clean. We worship God when we mirror the forgiveness he has lavished on us by lavishing it on others.

Easy Prep for Leaders

Let's Praise God!—Make sure your video equipment is ready. Decide on a snack that can be served with napkins, and prepare it ahead of time. (We've listed brownies, but cookies can be used just as easily.)

Preschool Activities—Refer to the preschool pages for preparations.

1 Let's Praise God!

Play music videos from the *KidsOwn Worship DVD* as children arrive. Greet them by name, and say to each one, "You have been forgiven."

When everyone has arrived, begin the session.

Say Hello, everyone! Welcome to our worship time. God gives us so many gifts. One of those gifts is his forgiveness. When we do wrong, God forgives us for that wrong if we ask him to.

Ask

- **What does it mean to forgive someone?** (To stop being mad at someone; if someone hurts us, we let the person know it's OK.)
- **What does God want from us in return for his forgiveness?** (He wants us to follow him; nothing; our love; he wants us to forgive others.)

Say God does expect something from us because he forgives us. He expects us to forgive other people.

Ask

- **What kinds of things do we need to forgive people for?** (Doing something mean to us; hurting us; sinning against us.)
- **If God wants us to forgive other people and if we do it, what does that show God?** (That we love him; that we're following him; it honors God.)

Say When we do what God tells us to do, we honor him. Forgiveness is a great example of this. God tells us that he wants us to forgive other people as he has forgiven us. When we forgive other people, we show God that what he wants is important to us. In this way, we can worship God anywhere, every day, not just on Sundays at church.

Let's sing a song about God's mercy and forgiveness.

 Sing "The Lord Is Merciful" (Psalm 145:8).

Say God forgives us no matter what, because he is good. God is good whether we are having a good day or a bad day. Let's praise him for his goodness!

 Sing "He Is Good" (Nahum 1:7).

Say One of the ways we see God's love is through his forgiveness. Hold up a clean napkin. The Bible tells us that God's forgiveness makes us as clean as this napkin. He forgives our sins and forgets them.

The Bible also teaches us that God wants us to do something with his forgiveness. He wants us to pass it along.

Ask • What does it mean to pass something along? (To give it to others; to keep on giving it.)

Say We have some treats today, which we'll pass along to each other just as we pass along God's forgiveness. When God forgives us, we forgive each other. When you receive a brownie, pass it on to someone else. There will be enough for everyone, just as there is always enough of God's forgiveness for everyone.

If your group is in a circle, begin to pass the brownies (on napkins) one at a time around the circle. Children should pass the brownies until everyone has one. If your group is sitting in rows, pass brownies in each row.

Pray Dear God, help us pass along your forgiveness the way we have passed along these brownies. Thanks for being with us and forgiving us. Help us worship you by forgiving others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Let kids eat their brownies and then place the napkins under their chairs.

Ask • How did the brownies taste? (They were yummy; they tasted great!)
• What's the difference between something that's good and something that's bad? (We like things that are good; bad things make us angry or sad, and good things make us happy.)

Say One of the awesome things about God is that he can bring good out of anything. In the story we are going to hear later on, God brings good things out of a bad situation because one man was willing to forgive. Forgiveness is one of the ways that God brings good out of bad.

ALLERGY ALERT

See Session 1.



There is a Bible verse that says that God works all things together for good. So even when something happens that we don't think is a good thing—if someone hurts our feelings, for example—we can trust God to make it good eventually. Knowing that God is good helps us find a way to forgive people when they hurt us.

 Sing "No Matter How I Feel."

Say ▶ Good job! It's great to know the Bible teaches that God can bring good out of anything. The Bible teaches us a lot about what God does and who God is. It also teaches us about who we should be. God is the forgiver of our sins. Because he forgives our sins, we should forgive other people. See that connection? We forgive because we know God and he has forgiven us. When we are forgiving like God, we honor him.

This next song is also about who we should be. Jesus taught that we should be like a light in the world.

Ask ▶ • How do we do this? How do we be a light? (We show Jesus' love to others; we follow God; we forgive others the way God forgives us.)

Say ▶ We become like a light when we know God enough that we become like him—when we know his love enough that we start loving people as he loved us, and when we know his forgiveness enough that we start forgiving people as he has forgiven us. That's when we are like a light in the world. When we worship God by living as he told us to, we're shining his light in the world. Let's sing!

 Sing "Light of the World."

Say ▶ That was good singing. Being a light in the world, showing God's love and forgiveness, is such an important thing for us to do. Sometimes it's also a hard thing to do. It's easier sometimes to be angry or to pout or to say mean things about somebody who has hurt us.

Ask ▶ • Why do we forgive someone who has hurt us? (To show God's love; because God wants us to; it's the right thing to do; because God forgave us.)

Say ▶ Colossians 3:13 gives us the answer to that question. It says, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

Ask ▶ • What does it mean to bear with someone? (To put up with someone; to tolerate her; to get along with him.)
• What is a grievance? (Something that makes us angry; something that makes us sad.)

Say ▶ A grievance is anything that makes us sad. If someone breaks something we care about or says something that hurts our feelings, it is a grievance. It makes us grieve or be sad.

Colossians 3:13 tells us to be patient with each other and to forgive people if they hurt us in any way. This verse also tells us why. The last part says we should forgive in the same way God forgave us.

When you think about it, that's an important statement. God forgives us every time we sin. We can't look at people and say, "Well, they didn't forgive me, so I'm not going to forgive them." We have to say, "Well, I'm going to forgive them because God forgave me."

That's like cleaning up after your brother. You don't do it because he cleaned up after you. You do it because your mom cleans up after you. When you clean up after *him*, you're being like your mom. When we forgive others, we're being like God.

Ephesians 5:1 says, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children." We should try to be just like God, and trying to be like God includes forgiving people.

Speaking of cleaning up after someone, we passed brownies earlier as if we were passing out forgiveness. Now we need to clean up. But let's do it this way: Look for someone else's napkin, and pick that one up. When the trash can comes around, throw away the napkin you picked up. It doesn't matter if that same person picks up your napkin. You're not doing it for that particular person; you're doing it because God tells us to be kind and loving and forgiving no matter how people treat us. He tells us to be that way because that's how *he* is and we want to be like him.

Allow time for children to pick up a napkin from under someone else's chair. If you have a small group, let children take the napkins to the trash can. Otherwise have someone carry the trash can among the children.

Say Good job. It's not always easy to do something for someone else, but it's easier when we remember that we are doing it because of who God is in our lives. We worship God when we do good things because we know he wants us to.

Remembering God's place in our lives makes life go better. There is a verse in the Bible that says if we hope in God, he will renew our strength. That means he'll make us strong enough to obey him even when it's hard to do.

 Sing "My Hope Is in the Lord."

Say It's good to know that whether we feel tired or hurt or unhappy or angry, we can hope in God and he will help us. Trying to live your life the way God wants you to *can* be tiring.

Ask • Do you know why it's hard sometimes to live the way God wants you to? (Because we have to think about it; because we want to do things a different way.)

Say

Those are good ideas. Another way to say it is that we get tired because, when we obey God, we are always doing things differently than we would naturally. Our way of thinking is that if someone hurts us, we'll hurt that person back. God's way of thinking is that if someone hurts us, we'll forgive that person. God's ways are different from our ways. We worship him when we try to be like him by loving and forgiving, no matter what.

Our last song is about how God's way of loving is different from the way people love. His love is higher and deeper and reaches farther than ours does—it endures forever! As we sing, let's make a promise to God that we'll honor him by forgiving others.



Sing "His Love Endures Forever" (Psalm 100:4-5).

Pray

God, teach us to love the way you love. Teach us to forgive the way you forgive. We worship you with our songs and with our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

2**Let's Learn the Point!****Preschool Activities, pages 113-114**

At this time, have the preschool leader invite the preschoolers to go to their own room for this section of activities. Tear out the Preschool Activities page, and give it to the preschool leader. Have the preschool leader bring the preschoolers back to participate in Let's Pray! with the older children. If you prefer to keep all the children together, do the starred (*) activities. They will work well with both elementary and preschool children.

Elementary Activities*** The Joseph Comic Strip**

Have the children form four groups. In each group, appoint a leader who knows the story of Joseph and will understand how the assigned passage fits into the story. Give each group a piece of white poster board, markers, and one of the following assignments.

1. Joseph sold as a slave (Genesis 37:23-28)
2. Joseph put in charge of Egypt (Genesis 41:39-43)
3. Joseph as a brother (Genesis 45:1-3)
4. Joseph forgiving his brothers (Genesis 50:15-21)

After reading the assigned passage, each group should discuss the following questions:

- Who are the main people in this passage?

- What did Joseph do?
- Who honored God? How?
- Who dishonored God? How?

After discussing its passage, each group should discuss what the key scene of the passage was and draw a comic strip frame based on that key scene. The children should also practice explaining the frame to prepare for the next activity.

* *Joseph Forgives*

Gather the artwork from the four groups, and display the poster-board frames in order. As you get to the part of the story illustrated in the comic strip, allow that group to tell that part of the story.

Say **Joseph had 10 big brothers and one little brother. He got picked on more than most kids because his 10 older brothers were jealous of him. They just about hated him. When they got the chance, they showed him how much.** Allow the first group to explain the frame.

Joseph ended up as a slave in Egypt, and he was a slave for 13 years. Then the king asked him to interpret a dream for him. Joseph did a good job interpreting the dream. Then something very important happened. Allow the second group to explain its frame.

One of the things Joseph did for Egypt was to help the Egyptians save up food so that they wouldn't starve during the famine when their crops wouldn't grow. Joseph's brothers lived outside Egypt, and they were starving. So they traveled to Egypt to buy food to take home. They had to buy the food from Joseph, but they didn't recognize him.

Joseph recognized his brothers, though. He gave them several tests to see if they were still mean. Once Joseph could see that his brothers had changed, this is what happened. Allow Group 3 to explain its frame.

Joseph's brothers and their father all came to live in Egypt. Joseph took care of all of them. But Joseph's brothers were still afraid of Joseph. They didn't know what he might do to them. Here's what happened. Allow Group 4 to explain its frame.

- Ask**
- **How did Joseph honor God?** (He forgave his brothers; he was kind to his brothers even though they were mean to him; he forgave as God forgave.)
 - **Do you think it was easy for Joseph to forgive his brothers? Why or why not?** (No, it's easier to get them back; yes, God helped him; no, it's never easy to forgive someone who hurt you.)

(continued on page 115)

Joseph Forgives His Brothers

Genesis 42–45

Worship Theme:



We can honor God by forgiving others.

Easy Prep for Leaders

Circle of Forgiveness Game—Use masking tape to outline a circle big enough for all the children to stand in at one time.

Using Theo

Consider using Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet today in these ways:

- Have Theo lead the preschoolers from the main worship area to the preschool room.
- Have Theo help you explain the “Gift-Wrapped Forgiveness” activity.
- See the KidsOwn Worship Kit for a puppet skit written for today’s worship session.



Gift-Wrapped Forgiveness

Say When we forgive someone who has done something that hurt our feelings or made us angry, we are honoring God. Forgiving someone else is like giving God a present. We do it just for him.

Let’s make a little reminder for ourselves. Give each child a tissue.

Gather the corners together so there is a little pouch. Hold the pouch inside your fist. Then put some forgiveness into the pouch. Say, “I forgive you,” into your hand, and squeeze tight.

Ask • Why do you think God feels honored or happy when we forgive?

Have helpers tie ribbons around the “forgiveness” the children hold in their hands. If a child has let go of the tissue, have the child gather it again and say, “I forgive you,” into it. Then tie it with a ribbon. When everyone’s tissue is tied, have children sit down.

Say We can’t really hold all our forgiveness in a tissue. We have more forgiveness than we could ever wrap up. But this little forgiveness present reminds us that when we forgive someone, we are doing something for God. We are honoring him.

Have children put their “presents” in a safe place.

Joseph Forgives

If possible, have children sit in a circle for the Bible story and have a helper directly across from you. Have at least eight cans of food behind you as you tell the story.

Say The Bible tells us about Joseph. When Joseph was young, his mean brothers sold him as a slave and he was taken to Egypt.

Because Joseph honored God in whatever he did, he eventually got promoted from a slave to an employee of a government official who was sort of like the vice president.

God told Joseph that a famine would come. A famine happens when farmers can't grow food and people don't have enough to eat. Joseph helped the people get ready for the famine. Before the famine, when people had plenty of food, he told the people to bring all their extra food to him so he could save it for the famine.

Pass the cans of food, one at a time, to the children on both sides of you. Have children pass the cans on until the helper on the other side of the circle has them all. Have the helper stack the cans in a pyramid.

Because of Joseph's plan, the people of Egypt had plenty of food when the famine came, but the people outside of Egypt didn't. Guess who came to Egypt to get some food one day? Joseph's brothers! The same mean brothers who sold Joseph as a slave!

Joseph was in charge of giving out the food, but his brothers didn't even recognize him. Joseph could get even with his brothers if he wanted to. He could say, "See that pile of food? Don't give them *any*."

But Joseph didn't want to hurt his brothers. Joseph wanted to honor God. Honoring God meant forgiving his brothers.

Joseph said, "I'm your brother Joseph. I'm the one you sold as a slave. I forgive you."

Joseph sent food home with his brothers. Have the helper pass the food back around the circle.

Joseph honored God by forgiving his brothers. We want to honor God by forgiving other people, too.

Circle of Forgiveness Game

Have everyone spread out around the edges of the room. Stand in the circle.



Say We're going to play "You're Forgiven!" The circle I'm standing in is the circle of forgiveness. At some time, we all do something that we are sorry for. When we do, we are outside the circle of forgiveness. But God said that if we'll tell him what we've done, he'll forgive us. He also tells us we can forgive each other.

Choose a song from your worship music to play during this game.

Say As long as you hear the music, stay very still. When the music stops, take two steps—and only two steps—toward the circle of forgiveness. When you get close enough to the circle that I can touch your hand and say, "You're forgiven," you can come into the circle with me. Then you can start "forgiving" others, too.

Repeat this process until everyone is in the circle.

- Ask**
- How did it feel to be forgiven and get in the circle?
 - How did it feel to forgive someone and bring that person into the circle?

Say In real life forgiving doesn't always feel so good. Sometimes it's hard. But we don't do it because it's easy or hard or because it feels good. We do it because we honor God when we forgive. He deserves that honor!

Leader Skillbuilder

Games are a wonderful forum for reviewing and clarifying concepts. Let loose and have fun with the children while you play a game with them, but keep your heart's eyes and ears open for opportunities that God will bring your way to clarify the point of the lesson. Keep the theme in mind as you play together, and discover those teachable moments.

(continued from page 112)

- **If forgiving people is so hard, why is it so important that we do it?** (Because it shows God's love; because God tells us to; it honors God.)

Pray ▶ God, help us to forgive people. Help us to be more like you. We want to honor you with everything we do, including forgiving. In Jesus' name, amen.

* *Paid in Full*

Say ▶ We honor God when we forgive someone, so understanding forgiveness is important. Let's talk about what it means.

One of the ways of forgiving that the Bible talks about is in terms of debt. Let's say that you owe somebody money but that person says, "That's OK. You are forgiven. You don't have to pay me back." That would be a wonderful thing, right?

That's what Joseph did for his brothers. They owed him a lot more than money. They stole *years* from his life! But Joseph said, "That's OK. You're forgiven. You don't have to pay me back." He honored God.

That's what God does for us when he forgives our sins. He says, "That's OK. My Son died for your sins. You don't have to die for them."

When we forgive someone, we are saying, "That's OK. God forgave me, so I forgive you." We honor God when we do that.

There is a term for that. It is "paid in full." That's what somebody marks on a bill when we don't owe any more on it. Show your Paid in Full stamp. Stamp "Paid in Full" on a piece of paper, and show it to the group.

That's what God did for us when Jesus died on the cross. He paid the price for our sins. He marked us "Paid in Full." That's what we do when we forgive. We mark someone else "Paid in Full."

Stamp the back of each child's hand.

Say ▶ Let's remember that when someone does something that hurts us or makes us angry, we honor God when we forgive that person. God has paid the penalty for our sins by forgiving us. We honor him when we forgive others. Hold up your stamped hand as we pray.

Pray ▶ God, thank you for forgiving us. Help us forgive others so we can be like you and honor you. In Jesus' name, amen.

3

Let's Pray!

The Offering

Say Today we talked a lot about forgiveness. We talked about how to forgive someone and when to forgive someone. We talked about how hard it is sometimes to forgive someone. Mostly, though, we talked about the fact that we honor God when we forgive. We honor him by doing what he asks.

Before you give your offering today, think of one person you need to forgive. Maybe that person hurt your feelings or broke something of yours. When the offering bowl comes to you, make a promise to God that you will forgive that person so that you can bring honor to him.

Take the offering.

Prayer in Motion

Have children stand and do the motions as they pray this prayer together.

God, you have forgiven me;	<i>(Lift your right hand up to God.)</i>
Help me forgive others.	<i>(Lift your left hand out to the side.)</i>
I know this brings you honor, Lord.	<i>(Put your hands together in prayer.)</i>
Help me forgive others.	<i>(Put both hands out to the side.)</i>
God, I want to worship you	<i>(Put your hands together in front, chest high.)</i>
With all my heart and life.	<i>(Draw a big circle with your hands, and bring them back together, chest high.)</i>
I want to worship you	<i>(Keep your hands in front of you.)</i>
By forgiving.	<i>(Place both hands over your heart, one over the other.)</i>

Amen.

Prayer Whispers

Say Before we go, let's make a promise to God that we will forgive people this week, even when they don't deserve it, because he has forgiven us. Now think of someone you need to forgive. If you can't think of anyone, think of someone who makes you mad sometimes, someone you'll need to forgive eventually. We don't need to tell everyone *here* who that is. But we are going to whisper the name to God. We're going to let him know that we understand that we will honor him by forgiving this person.

Now, when you whisper in someone's ear, how loudly do you talk? (Whisper.) **Not very loud. And when you whisper into someone's ear, you might put your hands on each side of your mouth like this** (cup your hands around your mouth) **so the sound goes right to his or her ear.**

So this is what we'll do. We'll stand on our tiptoes as high as we can. We'll put our hands to our mouths and whisper that person's name in God's ear. This is our promise to God that we will be forgiving.



God, we're going to whisper into your ear the name of someone we need to forgive. We'll tell you the name so that you know we really do understand. We know that when we forgive this person, we're honoring you. The name is (have everyone whisper the name toward the ceiling through cupped hands). **Thank you, God, for forgiving us. We want you to be honored by our lives. We love you. Amen.**