

# HOPE IN HARDSHIP

Joseph  
Genesis 37;  
45:1–10; 50:20  
1899–1876 BC

## BIBLE TRUTH

God works for the good for His people.

## LEARNER GOAL

I can explain how God is faithful to fulfilling His plan of salvation in the midst of treachery and great adversity.

## BIBLE VERSE

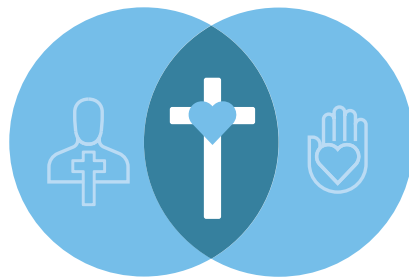
You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.  
Genesis 50:20

## LAW & GOSPEL

We question God's will for us and are tempted to doubt His love for us when we experience troubles. **God assures us of His love for us through Jesus, our Savior, and helps us in our troubles, enabling us to serve our neighbors in the vocations He has given us.**

## SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

The unusual life of Jacob's favorite son, Joseph, occupies a turning point in the history of God's people. Joseph was despised by his brothers, was sold into slavery, attained success and then lost it to false accusations, was imprisoned, and served in Pharaoh's court. Joseph summarizes his life in one sentence addressed to his brothers, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20).



## CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

### IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God claims me as His redeemed child through Christ, regardless of any circumstances or trials in life.

### CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I am to love God and serve my neighbor, even when times are difficult. As I do so, I remember that, in the end, God works good for His people.

## GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

*See how this lesson builds on learning for each age.*

### ADULT

I can explain how God is faithful to fulfilling His plan of salvation in the midst of treachery and great adversity.

### YOUTH

I can express that God is with me in hardships and He gives me hope.

### ELEMENTARY

I understand that God works for the good of His people.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God helps me with my troubles.

## LESSON PREP

**BASIC** Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

**MORE TIME** Read the article entitled "Cords of Love" on page 74 of *TLSB*.

**IN DEPTH** Read through the First Article (Part 2) in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)*.



### LEADER NOTE

For the opening question, it may be good to have your learners first write down their thoughts and their one word. Then, in small groups or pairs, have them compare their words. Remember that the goal is to help them understand God's faithfulness to us in Christ, despite adversity from the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh.



### BONUS ACTIVITY

The narrative of Joseph is a long one, and there's not enough time to cover every important detail in one lesson. To extend the lesson, read chapter 39 and focus on how Joseph displayed his faithfulness when tempted. Consider using the questions from the Central Thought section of the Sixth Commandment in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (2017) as discussion points.

# LAUNCH

## WELCOME

Welcome the group and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests; pray for those requests either now or at the conclusion.

## REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Learner Goal, and Bible Verse. Then, begin with the opening reflection question on the lesson handout.

## OPENING REFLECTION

When is it easiest to see God's good gifts in your life? When is it most difficult? In one word, describe what makes the biggest difference in your life between the two.

# LEARN & LIVE

## GENESIS 37:1–11

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

A number of years after God had revealed Himself to Jacob (now also named Israel), Jacob's father, Isaac, is dead, as is his favorite wife, Rachel. Jacob's household is made up of his other wife, Leah, two maidservants, twelve sons, at least one daughter, and many others. He favors his son Joseph, leaving the older ten sons jealous and hateful. Much evil will come from this brokenness. God appears and shows seventeen-year-old Joseph several dreams that predict the future, when the family will bow to him. These dreams would likely comfort Joseph later on in his suffering.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

Look over this section, and then list the different ways the brokenness of sin infects the life of Joseph's family. How are similar sins played out in our lives today?

### REFLECTION HELPS

Joseph's family was mixed, with multiple wives and servants bearing children to Jacob; Joseph's brothers had likely done evil that warranted a bad report; Jacob showed favoritism; the brothers hated Joseph; and Jacob rebuked Joseph for not showing honor to him as father. Our families also often suffer from brokenness of similar sins, yet God remains faithful.

## GENESIS 37:12–36

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

Joseph travels quite a distance from home, roughly fifty miles, to visit his older brothers. This was quite an opportunity for them to fall into temptation and betray him. Though the oldest brother, Reuben, resists the idea, the other brothers plan from the get-go to get rid of Joseph. Judah ultimately convinces them to profit off the loss of their brother by selling him into slavery. Later, Judah would take a more noble role in the family, but now he demonstrates a base attitude toward his "good as dead" brother. God eventually used Joseph's slavery to save Jacob's family from starvation.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

What one point sticks out to you the most about the betrayal by Joseph's brothers? Why is that? What is it about lies and betrayal that stings so bad in our lives? How does this story help us understand what Jesus went through for us?

### REFLECTION HELPS

The brothers not only plotted to kill Joseph but they also schemed, lied, and betrayed. Jesus was betrayed by a friend. Joseph was sold into slavery; Jesus was betrayed to death. But Jesus did so out of love for us, knowing His suffering would free us from eternal suffering.

## GENESIS 45:1–15

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

Roughly thirteen years have passed since we last saw Joseph, and many things have happened. He was sold into slavery in Egypt, rose to power, and was betrayed by his master's wife. Then, in prison, he again rose to prominence, interpreted dreams, and was forgotten by one he helped. Eventually, he was remembered and interpreted a dream for Pharaoh. He again rose to power and was instrumental in preparing the region to survive a major famine. When his brothers show up for food, they don't recognize Joseph. After a period of testing, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and rejoices that God was using his suffering to save his family. What a testament to God's faithfulness!

### REFLECTION QUESTION

What prompted Joseph to forgive his brothers? In what ways did God use our human sin to ultimately bring about His saving work in Jesus?

### REFLECTION HELPS

Joseph told his brothers not to fear, because God had used his hardship to preserve their lives, the lives of their families, and ultimately the promise of the Messiah. Jesus suffered the pain of the sinful human world for us by taking on human flesh and experiencing pain, betrayal, and the final sting of death to give us eternal life. Like Joseph, Jesus demonstrated that God can salvage brokenness and offer free forgiveness and eternal life. He is faithful.

## GENESIS 50:15–21

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

Later, when Jacob dies, Joseph's brothers are terrified of what he will do to them. After all, they deserve to be punished. Yet Joseph acknowledges that the suffering they meant for evil was used by God for good instead. We don't have to make excuses for God when we go through brokenness and sin. We can call evil what it is. We do remember, though, that in the end, Christ has overcome sin, death, and the devil for us. In the meantime, the suffering we undergo always points us to the cross of Christ: what He has done and continues to do for us. We remember His faithfulness to us in our brokenness.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

How is Joseph's attitude toward his brothers like Jesus' attitude toward us? How is it different? What do they both tell us about God's epic plan not to abandon us but to restore us?

### REFLECTION HELPS

Both Joseph and Jesus acknowledged that they didn't get what they deserved, wept over human brokenness, and were willing to forgive. Joseph, however, was merely a sinful human being. Jesus, the Son of God, sacrificed His own life out of love for us humans to restore us to the Father.

## LEAVE

### FINAL REFLECTION

What's one way you will remind yourself and your household that, in Jesus, you have a guaranteed future, regardless of your present circumstances?

### TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Page.

### CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray before you leave.



### BONUS ACTIVITY

Do an online image search for life in ancient Egypt to get a general impression of life during the time of Joseph. Referencing the Twelfth Dynasty should give a good general idea of the appropriate timeline.



### CHRIST CONNECTION

God used Joseph's hardships to preserve lives and fulfill the promise of the Messiah many years later. Jesus suffered the pain of the sinful human world for us so we could have eternal life.



### LEADER NOTE

Consider daily prayers, writing Gospel promises on notes or in frames on walls, or reading or reciting the Second Article of the Creed together this week, especially when times get tough or there's great uncertainty.

