

HOPE IN HARDSHIP

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

OVERVIEW

BIBLE TRUTH

God works for the good for His people.

BIBLE VERSE

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

LEARNER GOAL

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

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 account of Jacob's favorite son, Joseph, is a turning point in the history of God's people. The unusual timeline of Joseph's life includes him being despised by his brothers, sold into slavery, attaining success and then losing it all to false accusations, being imprisoned, and serving the court of Pharaoh. 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).

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read Genesis 37; 45:1–10; and 50:20 and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

MORE TIME Read "Apologetics Helps" on the back page in preparation for the "Live" section.

IN DEPTH Read and meditate on Psalm 91. God is our refuge and fortress.

SUPPLY LIST

FOR THIS LESSON

- Bag of cotton balls or wadded-up paper balls
- Watch or timer
- Sheets of paper

FOR EVERY LESSON

- Student copies of *Defend Journal*
- Bibles
- Pens
- Shareable images from digital resource center.
- Supplies for bonus activities



BONUS ACTIVITY

Let youth pray for one another, using the “Share and Pray” activity.



DEFEND JOURNAL

Hand out journals and turn to Lesson 6.



BONUS ACTIVITY

Act it out with “Forgiveness.”

LAUNCH

WALK-IN QUESTION

Is life fair?

NOT FAIR!

Make two piles of cotton balls or wadded-up paper at one end of the room. Divide into two groups. Each team has one minute to move their pile to the other side of the room. Tell one team that they cannot use their hands or feet.

SAY Was this game fair? Turn to a partner and share a situation that was unfair. Life isn’t fair. Sometimes we suffer because of others’ actions. Sometimes other people suffer because of our actions. Joseph experienced a lot of unfairness, but through everything, God was with him.

PRAY Lord God, we know that because of sin in the world, life isn’t fair. Help us to trust You, knowing that You work for the good of Your children. Amen.

LEARN

READ “THE BIG PICTURE” AND TALK IT OUT

▷ How do you see God working in the life of Joseph, despite all the unfairness he encountered?

DISCUSSION POINTS

- “The LORD was with Joseph” (Genesis 39:2). God worked good out of all the bad that happened to Joseph and used it to further His plan to save His people.

LEARN ABOUT “JOSEPH”

Read the Bible narratives aloud to the group, ask volunteers to read, or listen to each section from a Bible app. As you do, ask youth to find and write down hardships Joseph encountered in each chapter of his life and the hope that he clung to.

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS (GENESIS 37)

Hardships: He was hated by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and sold as a slave.

Hope: He had dreams of his family bowing to him; his brothers didn’t kill him; God was with him.

REUNION (GENESIS 45:1–10; 50:20)

Hardships: His emotional turmoil at seeing his brothers

Hope: God worked through Joseph to save his brothers and God’s chosen line; God helped Joseph to forgive and to realize that God caused good to come from evil.

GOD’S PLAN

God had a plan for Joseph’s life, a plan to bless him and bless others through him. But there’s something even bigger going on here.

▷ How did God work through Joseph’s life to keep His promise to Abraham and further His plan of salvation?

DISCUSSION POINTS

- God used Joseph’s hardships to preserve lives and fulfill the promise of the Messiah many years later. Jesus suffered so that we could have eternal life. Jesus, like Joseph, demonstrated that God can salvage our brokenness and offer us free forgiveness and eternal life. God is faithful.

LIVE

DISCUSS “WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO ‘GOOD’ PEOPLE?”

Discuss the question below. Youth may want to write their own questions and thoughts in the *Defend Journal* as well. See the back page of this guide for tips to help equip the youth for some frequently asked questions.

► **Why do bad things happen in this world? What about good things?**

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Some people believe in fate or karma—some force that affects the events of a person’s life. This idea is not true.
- Everything truly good comes from God, and all bad things come from the effect of sin on the world. God never causes evil, but He can use bad things for the good of His people and purpose.
- As God’s children, we have hope, even when we experience suffering and death. Jesus has conquered sin and death for us by His suffering and death on the cross. We look forward to Jesus’ return and living in the new creation, where there will be no suffering, sin, or death.
- God delights in giving us good things to enjoy in this life. The greatest good God gave is forgiveness in Jesus. The gift of eternal life that the Good Shepherd gives us outweighs all the bad in this world.

CONSIDER “MY STORY”

Point youth to “My Story” in the *Defend Journal* and ask a volunteer to read the first paragraph. Direct youth to follow the instructions: In the first box, draw or write something that is unfair in your life. In the second box, draw or write how good might come out of that situation. In the third box, draw or write how God will ultimately make all things good for those who believe in Him.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

To check for understanding, have youth ask one another: **How is God working in your life?** Thank those who share.

LEAVE

Read the Bible Verse, written in the *Defend Journal*:

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

Ask for prayer requests. Offer to pray, or invite a student to pray for everyone.



CHRIST CONNECTION

God used Joseph’s hardships to preserve lives and fulfill the promise of the Messiah many years later. Jesus, the Messiah, suffered on the cross and died so that we could have eternal life.



LEADER NOTE

God loves to give us good things. Sometimes we focus on the bad in the world and forget the good. Ask youth to share their favorite “good things” from God.



BONUS ACTIVITY

The effect of evil on the world is a serious subject. Lighten the mood with “Watch and Sing.”



SHAREABLE DOWNLOAD

Connect with youth before and after the lesson using shareable images from the digital resource center.

APOLOGETICS HELPS

DEFEND THE FAITH

The recorded histories of peoples and countries are full of victories and praise for themselves. The recorded history of God's people in the Bible is unique in that it shows failures, weakness, and embarrassing accounts. The fact that Scripture does not try to hide these accounts adds to the Bible's credibility from a human understanding. God's strength is shown in our human weaknesses.

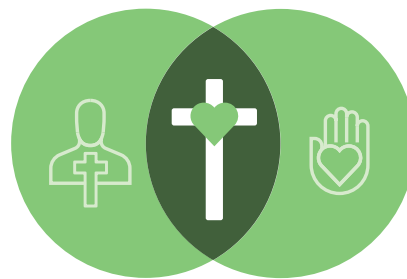
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

► Why is there evil in the world?

The world was not always evil. God created a perfect world where everything was good and there was no sin. Evil entered the world when Adam and Eve gave in to the devil's temptation and disobeyed God. The consequences of that sin include many evils, including hard labor, broken relationships, decay, and death. People are born sinful, and our sinful condition contributes to the evils of this world.

► Why is there suffering and death in this world?

God told Adam, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and sin, decay, and death entered the world. Suffering is a result of sin in the world. Christians may suffer because of their own sin or someone else's sin. But God can make good come out of even evil situations, as He did in the life of Joseph.



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.

★ BONUS ACTIVITIES

SHARE AND PRAY

5–10 minutes

Ask students to think about something bad that's happened in their life. Let them share as they are comfortable. Pray in pairs or as a group, asking God for comfort and strength as we face bad things. End by thanking God for His love and hope.

FORGIVENESS

10–20 minutes

Ask several students to act out Genesis 50:15–21, where Joseph forgives his brothers. What motivated Joseph to forgive?

WATCH AND SING

15–30 minutes

Find a video of a musical number from *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and watch it together. Compare the storyline with the story of Joseph in the Bible.