

# Counsel Children for Personal and Family Problems

If you have not yet read *Guidelines for Children's Teachers* #5, then please do so.

Dear Lord, help the children to treat family members lovingly like Joseph did.

**Learning goal:** Children know and heed what Scripture says about treating family members.

Choose any of these learning activities that fit current needs and opportunities. Children may like to colour the picture on the last page of this lesson.

**Learn from the account of how Joseph forgave his brothers.**



An older child or teacher briefly reviews key points of the story of Joseph and his brothers, whose descendants became the tribes of Israel (*Genesis chapters 37 & 39 through 46*):

- Joseph's brothers envied him because their father Israel, who was also called Jacob, gave Joseph a beautiful coat. (This Joseph was not the husband of Mary.)
- They hated Joseph because he dreamed that they would bow down to him.
- They plotted to kill Joseph, but instead, sold him to foreigners as a slave.
- Potiphar, an official of Egypt's king, bought Joseph who served Potiphar wisely.
- Joseph, after setbacks and injustices, rose to rule at the side of the king, Pharaoh.
- During a famine, his brothers came to buy grain from him but did not recognize him.
- He returned their money and said not to return without the younger brother Benjamin.

Tell or act out the last part of the story from Genesis 44 and 45:1-15, about what Joseph did when his brothers returned to Egypt with Benjamin, the youngest brother. Ask these questions after telling the story:

1. What did Joseph tell his servant to put into Benjamin's sack of grain? (*See Gen. 44:2*)
2. What was the punishment to be, if someone did steal the silver cup? (*See Gen. 44:10*)
3. Did the brothers abandon Benjamin like they had done to Joseph? (*No, see Gen. 44:33*)
4. Were the brothers sorry for what they had done? (*Yes, see Gen. 44:34*)
5. How did Joseph feel while he was talking to his brothers? (*See Gen. 45:2*)
6. Did Joseph forgive his brothers? (*See Gen. 45:15-16*)

Dramatize parts of the story of Joseph and his brothers. Arrange with the congregational worship leader for the children to present this drama.

Let older children or adults be **Narrator**, **Judah**, **Servant** and **Joseph** who has a sack. Let younger ones be **Benjamin** and other **Brothers**. The brothers have sacks for grain; if sacks are not available, then pretend to have sacks.

- Narrator:** *Tell the first part of the story, from Genesis 44:1-13. Then say, "Hear what Joseph says to his servant."*
- Joseph:** *"Here, servant, hide this cup in the grain sack of the youngest brother."*
- Servant:** *Hide the cup in the smallest brother's sack.*
- Brothers:** *(Walk and say things to show joy, like "Thank God!" or "We have food!")*
- Judah:** *"The Egyptian let us take grain to our hungry families."*
- Servant:** *Run after Benjamin. Say, "You stole my master's cup! Look, here it is in your sack. You will pay for it by becoming a slave!"*
- Brothers:** *Go back sadly. Say things to show sadness, like "Benjamin is a slave now." "Poor Benjamin!" "How did it happen?"*
- Judah:** *"God is punishing us for what we did to Joseph."*
- Narrator:** *Tell the second part of the story, from Genesis 44:14-34. Say, "Hear what Judah says to Joseph."*
- Judah:** *"My master, please let me take Benjamin's place as your slave. My father will be too sad if Benjamin does not go home to him!"*
- Narrator:** *Tell the third part of the story, from Genesis 45:1-15. Say, "Hear what Joseph says."*
- Joseph:** *My brothers, I am overjoyed! God brought good from the bad you did to me. He brought me to take care of you and your families. I forgive you everything!"*
- Narrator or older child:** *Thank those who helped.*

If the children dramatize the story for the adults, then let them also ask the adults the same questions that are listed above.

Write on small pieces of paper things that family members do that offend each other. Put these pieces of paper in a cup and ask God to forgive these bad things. Pour the papers out on the ground to show how we give all these things to God.

**Pray again** to ask God to help us forgive those who hurt us and to love them.

Download a longer, free version of the drama of Joseph and his brothers:

<http://biblestoryskits.com/category/genesis/>

**Draw a sack for the children to copy.** Let them explain about it to the adults during the next worship time, or to their parents. It illustrates how we forgive and put away grudges against family members. We put our grudges in the sack and let God have it. He takes away our sins.



**Discuss:** What are other examples of when we should forgive family members for things they have done that hurt us in the past?

**Deal with personal problems of children:**

- If any children have problems, then spend time with them apart from the rest of the group.
- Listen well to discern the underlying root causes of their problems. Pray for help.
- Deal with the root rather than the superficial complaints that they often say first.
- Deal with problems at the appropriate level. If necessary, talk with parents.
- Apply God's Word to the cause of a problem, rather than to mere symptoms.
- Help children change their behavior by taking one easy step at a time.
- Notice if a child suffers from bad feelings. Do some feel bad about themselves? Assure them that they are God's child and that God forgives them and loves them.
- Some children that act badly merely want attention. Give them things to do to serve other children or their parents. Praise them for what they do.
- Let older children do things with the younger ones. Let older children serve as "big brothers" to younger children and disciple them. Let each child have a "big brother."

Let five children each recite a verse from Philippians 2:5-9.

Let older children write poems, songs or dramas about forgiving family members.

Memorize Ephesians 4:32. "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

