

September 23, 2012

## Lesson 3: God Uses Joseph for Good



Genesis 37:3-8, 26-34; 50:15-21

**3** Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. **4** But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. **5** Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. **6** He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. **7** There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it, and bowed down to my sheaf." **8** His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words.

**26** Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? **27** Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. **28** When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt. **29** When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes. **30** He returned to his brothers, and said, "The boy is gone; and I, where can I turn?" **31** Then they took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. **32** They had the long robe with sleeves taken to their father, and they said, "This we have found; see now whether it is your son's robe or not." **33** He recognized it, and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." **34** Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

**50:15** Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" **16** So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, **17** 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. **18** Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." **19** But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? **20** Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. **21** So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

# God Uses Joseph for Good

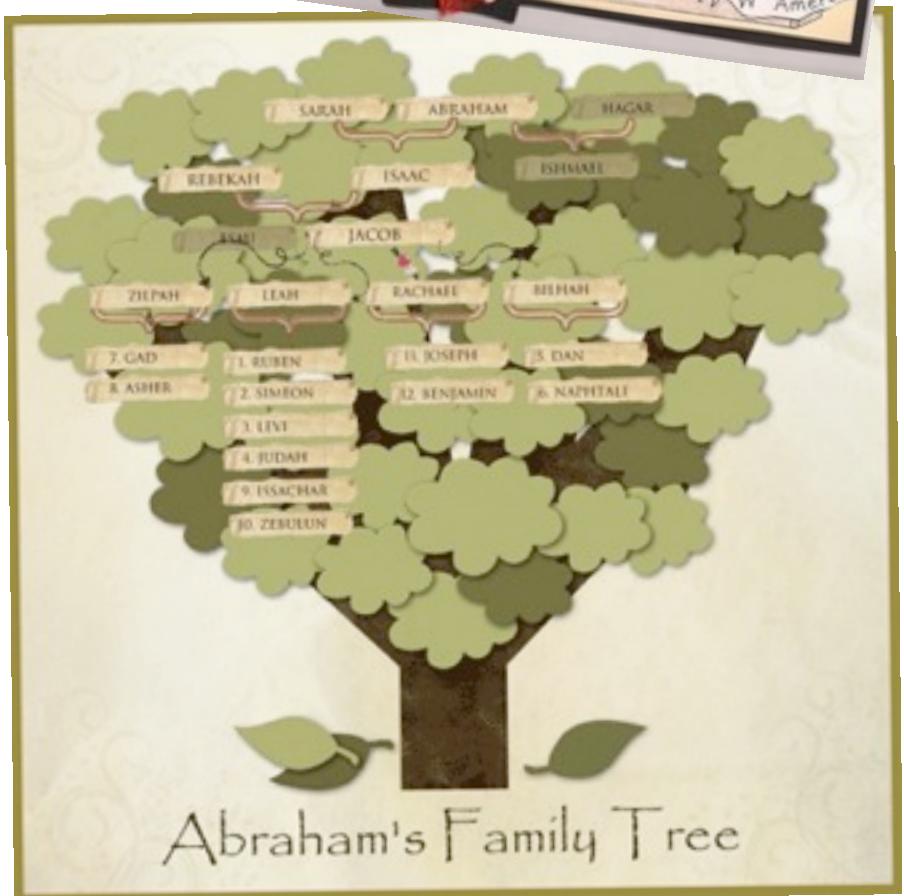
Genesis 37:3-8, 26-34; 50:15-21

September 23, 2012

**The Big Story Truth:** God can turn even something meant to harm us into something good.

**About the Scripture Passage:** Last week we heard about the promise that Abraham and

Sarah would have a large family. This week, we see their family tree start to expand. Abraham and Sarah had a son named Isaac. Isaac had twins named Jacob and Esau. Jacob had 12 children and so many grandchildren that by the end of our story today their family will number 70 people! (That's not even to mention that a whole separate family tree happens through Esau that we don't get to hear much about!) God has been faithful to keep the promise that God gave to Abraham! But now there is trouble in the family. The brothers are fighting. Famine comes to the land. If this family is going to survive.... God will have to intervene. God is faithful to the promise and provides a way for the family to be rescued! The story of Joseph is a long one. Our assigned passage for today only covers part of the story. The whole story can be read in Genesis 37-50. If possible, read through the whole story as part of your devotions and preparation for teaching this week.



**Where in the World Are We?** When our story begins we are in the land of Canaan. But Joseph, having been sold by his brothers, has been taken to Egypt. By the end of the story, the entire family has moved to Egypt. During the class, you can represent this journey by having the figures of Joseph and his family begin in Canaan. As the story is told, remove Joseph to Egypt. By the end of the story, reunite Joseph and his family in Egypt. Leave these figures on the map in anticipation of next week's lesson.

**Making the Connection:** Joseph was almost killed, then sold into slavery, gained favor only to fall from it and be imprisoned. Joseph could have easily been bitter. But God was working behind the scenes. Because of all that Joseph went through, he was perfectly positioned so that he, his father, and his whole family could be saved and continue to prosper. There are times in life when we may be tempted to think that we have been abandoned or forgotten by God. Sometimes we go through things that we don't understand why God lets those things happen. But God is always working for good behind the scenes. God is always making a way, always providing, always being faithful to the promise never to leave us or forsake us.



### Did you know?

In this story, Joseph's dad is called by two different names- Jacob and Israel. The story of the name change is back in Genesis 32. The family of Jacob/Israel become known as Israelites. The 12 tribes of Israel are the sons of Jacob and the sons of Joseph that Jacob counted as his own (See Genesis 48). We'll hear much more about the Israelites and the 12 tribes of Israel throughout this year!

### Great Big Word of the Day:

### RECONCILIATION

Giving and receiving forgiveness for hurts we have caused or that have been done to us.



### Teacher Reflection

When has God worked good out of a bad situation in your life?

## *Large Group Opening*

Welcome children and begin by reviewing the words on the word wall with the kids and talking about last week's lesson. God was faithful to the promise to give Abraham lots of descendants. Today we are going to learn about how God continued to be faithful to Abraham's family. Sing the song "All His Promises." Let the kids know if you will be singing this song during the church service. If so, emphasize for the kids what an important message it is that God is faithful to the promises that he makes. This is something important that they can be excited about telling to everyone who comes to church this morning!

As there is time, choose some of the songs that kids are familiar with from VBS "Stand Firm" "Through it All" and "Watching Over You" work especially well with today's lessons. Remind the kids of what they learned this summer in Vacation Bible School about how God is with them whenever they go and even when they face tough situations. Let them know that today they will be hearing the story of Joseph, one of Abraham's descendants, and how God was with him even when we went through some really tough times. God used even the hard things for good!

Remember to collect the offering. Today would be a good day to make a final decision about how the offering will be designated if that hasn't already been decided.

# *Preschool*

## **Materials List:**

- Magic Scratch Off Paper (Purchased or Homemade)
- Figure of Joseph to put on the Bible bookshelf and one of Joseph and his family to use on the map as well
- Spark Story Bible
- Oversized t-shirt for each child (white or light colored work best)
- Fabric crayons (and/or permanent markers)
- Printable iron on transfers you have prepared with the word “loved” for each t-shirt ready to use during class (if you have extra adult volunteers) or have already put on the t-shirts prior to class.
- Copies of the Joseph’s Story coloring pages

## **Before the Children Arrive:**

Set out a sheet of magic scratch off paper at your place at the table along with a tool to “draw” on it. This paper can either be purchased from a store like Wal-Mart or it can be made by coloring all the white space on a piece of paper and then coloring over the top with a thick layer of black crayon.

## **Experiencing the Story and Skill Building**

Welcome the kids into the room from the large group gathering. Begin with reviewing the story from last week. Who was the story about? What was the promise that God gave to Abraham? What did God use to remind Abraham of this promise?

As you and the students retell the story from last week, allow your conversation to flow into a preview of this week’s story. God kept the promise to Abraham. Abraham did have a large family. (You can begin to scratch off the black portion of the paper to reveal the beautiful colors below in the shape of stars). In fact, today’s story is about Abraham’s great-grandchildren. (If possible, talk a little about the relationship of great-grandchild by asking the kids about the grandparents/great-grandparents. This will work especially well if you know the families and can point out who in their families is a great-grandparent like Abraham would be to the person in our story today.)

Since Abraham was already so old by the time he had his first son, he died before the story that we hear about today. But his grandson, Jacob and his great-grandsons are in this story. Today we are going to hear the story about how these descendants of Abraham were in trouble. The great-grandsons of Abraham were being really mean to their brother, Joseph. He was taken away to a foreign land and the brothers told their father he was dead. It was a mess. But God used even that stuff meant to harm Joseph for good. God was with Joseph and helped him in the bad times. And in the end God used Joseph to save the whole family. God kept his promise!

I bet Joseph and his family were surprised that God turned something so bad into something good! (Show your now beautiful scratch off artwork.) God always keeps God's promises!

Let's read about this story of Joseph in the Bible. This story comes from the first book of the Bible. Who remembers what the name of the first book of the Bible is? (Have students repeat the name "Genesis"). Point out on the Bible bookshelf image on the wall where the book of Genesis is. Recall with students that the first thing we hear in Genesis was about how God made the world (point to the sun) and about Adam and Eve and the fruit they ate that was the first sin (point to the apple) and then how we heard about Abraham and the promise to have a family as big and the number of stars in the sky (point to the stars). And now Joseph's story comes next. There's not a picture for Joseph up there but we could stick this picture up there if we want to. (If your Bible bookshelf is magnetic, stick a picture of Joseph in his colorful coat up on the book of Genesis. If not, you can stick him up even with a piece of tape. Be sure to also point out the action using the wall map. Joseph and his family should begin in the land of Canaan and then Joseph and his whole family should end up in Egypt. You may wish to move the figures on the map as the drama takes place in the story you read.)

Read "Joseph and His Brothers", "Pharaoh's Dreams", and "Joseph Helps His Family" (Spark Story Bible pages 48-65).

When you have finished reading the last story, ask the question found on page 65. How would you have felt if you had been Joseph and were seeing your brothers after such a long time?

Our great big word for today is “reconciliation.” (Have students repeat and practice that word with you.) Reconciliation means to give and receive forgiveness for hurts we have caused or that have been done to us. The story of Joseph and his brothers is a story of reconciliation because Joseph’s brothers asked for forgiveness and Joseph forgave his brothers even though they did a very mean thing to him. Joseph was even able to recognize that even though what his brothers did was wrong, that God turned it into something good for the whole family!

### **Activity**

Do you remember what special gift Joseph’s father gave him in the beginning of the story? (A beautiful, colorful coat.) Well today we are going to make some beautiful colored coats to give as gifts too. We are going to take these old t-shirts and turn them into beautiful reminders of how much God loves each of us! So, here’s how we are going to do this. I’m putting slips of paper with all your names on them into this paper bag. Each of you will get a turn to come up and to pick a name out of the bag... and then you are going to make a coat for that friend. (As the children come up, emphasize again that they are making the coat for their friend as a reminder of how much God loves them. Encourage the kids to think about their friend they are making the coat for as they work. What is the friend’s favorite color? etc.)

If it hasn’t already been done, place the word “loved” on each of the t-shirts either using an iron on transfer or writing it.

If there are students who finish much earlier than the others, give them a copy of Joseph’s story in coloring book format for them to work on coloring while the others are finishing up the t-shirts.

Once everyone has finished, have students give the coats they made to the friends that they made them for so every student gives and receives a beautiful coat as a reminder of God’s love and our care for one another. As long as you didn’t use anything that needs time to dry, encourage the kids to wear their coats to church as we talk about the story of Joseph during the worship service today.

# *Early Elementary*

## **Materials List:**

- Half sheet of paper
- Colorful crayons and one black one
- Capped pen
- Colorful coat cut out (for Bible Bookshelf chart)
- Spark Story Bible
- Supplies for the first activity option: each child will need a piece of white cardstock paper and a black crayon
- Supplies for second activity option: lots of broken crayons, white school glue, small cardboard or plywood squares for each child (approx. 6"x6")
- Students' smash books

## **Before the Students Arrive:**

Set out a half sheet of paper and colorful crayons at your spot at the table. Also be sure to have a black crayon and capped pen (for scratching off the crayon!)

## **Experiencing the Story/Skill Building:**

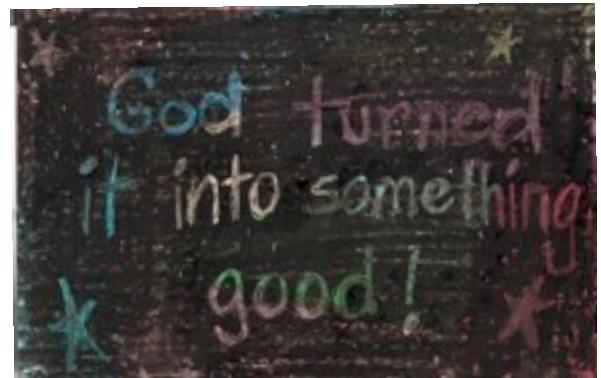
Welcome students. Begin using colorful crayons to color the piece of paper in front of you in random segments (see illustration). Tell the students that today, your story begins with a gift... the gift of a colorful coat. Ask if any of the students can guess which Bible story you are going to be learning about today. If anyone is able to guess, ask them to tell what they remember about the story of Joseph while each of you color the sheet in front of you to be as colorful as Joseph's coat. Talk about how Joseph was Abraham's great-grandson. You may wish to make some comparisons to the families represented in your class to help kids understand the relationship. Remind kids that because Abraham was very old when he had his first son, he had already died by the time Joseph was born and this story takes place, but when we hear about this story, we are hearing about the family that God promised to give Abraham.



After all the white space on your paper is filled with colorful crayon, start coloring over the top of the colors with the black crayon. Use this time to talk with the students about the bad things that happened to Joseph. His brothers threw him in a well, they sold him to traders, they lied to his father about what happened to him. Joseph was put in prison. He was left there for more than two years.



And famine was coming to the land--- famine so bad that Joseph's family would not have any food to eat to keep them alive (Color the entire sheet black). But God kept the promise he made to Abraham's family such a long time ago. God kept the promise that he would help them and help their family to grow big. God gave Joseph the gift of being able to tell the king about his dream and warn him in time about the famine that they could prepare and store food (begin scratching off some of the black crayon to reveal the colored crayon down below.) Joseph gained such favor with the king that he became in charge of all the food in the land so that when Joseph's family came to Egypt looking for food, Joseph was able to help them. God helped Joseph to forgive too so that even though Joseph knew his brothers had planned for bad things to happen to him, he was able to say: "God turned it into something good!" Show your completed crayon scratching to the class.



Tell students that the whole story can be found in the Bible in the same book as the other stories that we've heard so far come from. Do they remember the name of the book of the Bible? (Hint: It's the first book in the Bible!) Point out where Genesis is on the Bible bookshelf (review what the sun and apple and stars have to do with the stories that we have heard so far this year) and put a picture of the colorful coat up next to them on the book of Genesis.

Then read from the Spark Story Bible "Joseph and His Brothers", "Pharaoh's Dreams" and "Joseph Helps His Family" pages 48-65.

When you have finished reading the last story, ask the question found on page 65. How would you have felt if you had been Joseph and were seeing your brothers after such a long time?

Our great big word for today is “reconciliation.” (Have students repeat and practice that word with you.) Reconciliation means to give and receive forgiveness for hurts we have caused or that have been done to us. The story of Joseph and his brothers is a story of reconciliation because Joseph’s brothers asked for forgiveness and Joseph forgave his brothers even though they did a very mean thing to him. Joseph was even able to recognize that even though what his brothers did was wrong, that God turned it into something good for the whole family!

### **Activity:**

There are two choices for today’s activity. One option is for the kids to make their own scratch off paper as you just did in telling the story. Encourage them to “scratch” draw or write about something that was difficult in their lives that God turned into something good. The kids may choose to glue this page into their Smash books.

Another option for today’s activity would be to use broken crayons to make a small mosaic. (Either each student can make one individually or the group can make one together to hang in your classroom.) If this is the option that you choose today, show kids some pictures of art that was created by taking broken pieces of crayons and gluing them together to make something beautiful. As kids work, talk with them about things in our lives that are “broken” that God can put together in beautiful ways to use for good! Take pictures of the kids as they are working and their mosaics so that the pictures can be shared with other and glued into their smash books next week.



## *Broken Crayon Mosaic*

### Instructions

1. Begin with piece of sturdy cardboard or plywood. For individual size mosaics, 6"x6" is an appropriate size to work with.
2. Use a pencil to lightly sketch the desired design.
3. Apply a thick layer of glue to one section of the mosaic.
4. Stick the crayons to the glue. Some crayons may need to be broken into even smaller pieces. If using slightly larger pieces, it may help to shave off a little bit of the rounded side to a crayon so they can stick well to the board.
5. Use more glue liberally to help fill in gaps and secure the crayon pieces.





This mural was made by school kids in Michigan. It tells the story of Noah's ark. Look closely, can you find Noah's boat in the scene above?

Some of the crayons that were used in this mural were glued onto a board the long way, others were glued in standing up straight. Some were broken even further into very little pieces. Others were bigger.



# *Upper Elementary / Middle School*

## **Materials List:**

- A broken dish
- Picture(s) of broken glass mosaic(s)
- Spark NRSV Bibles for teacher and each student
- Crayons, markers, highlighters, or colored pens
- Smash Book supplies (torn tissue paper, small mosaic pics, etc.)
- “Broken Glass Jello” snack (optional)
- Students’ smash books

## **Before the Students Arrive:**

Set out on the table a few pieces of broken glass. (This could come from something that has accidentally broken around your house or a dish from goodwill that has been very carefully smashed.)

## **Experiencing the Story/Skill Building:**

Show the kids your broken dish. Ask the kids how many of them have ever broken a dish? Did they do it on purpose? What was the reaction of their parents or the adults around? What if one of them were to purposely throw their mom’s antique china dish on the ground? What would her reaction be? Why would Mom be so upset?

Pull out the picture of a mosaic made from broken glass included with this lesson (or ones you have brought from home). Talk about how the artists took pieces of glass (dishes, glasses, antiques, etc.) that were broken and made them into something beautiful. In some cases, the art that was made is even more beautiful than the plate was before it was broken.

Tell the kids that today we are going to read a story in which God was like an artist taking broken pieces and making something beautiful of it. The story we are going to hear today is of Abraham’s descendants, his grandson and great-grandsons and what happened when their relationships were broken.

Ask the students if they remember which book of the Bible we have been reading out of. Have them point out the book of Genesis on the Bible Bookshelf.

Review what we have read so far from the book of Genesis, particularly focusing on the promise that God gave Abraham. Ask students to listen for how God kept the promise to Abraham's family in today's story.

Because today's story is so long, we are going to skip around a little bit. Assign one of these sections to each student (divide or combine them as necessary to create enough sections for each student to have one.)

Ask students to find what's broken in this story. For each of the following sections ask students to find the "CRASH" in their section. Encourage students to write "CRASH!" in their Bibles next to each broken piece they find.

Genesis 37:1-4     (CRASH! *Joseph's Dad plays favorites, the brothers hate Joseph and can't say anything nice to him.*)

Genesis 37:5-11    (CRASH! *Joseph brags about his dreams to rule over his family, the brothers hate him even more.*)

Genesis 37:12-28   (CRASH! *The brothers plot to harm Joseph and sell him to traders.*)

Genesis 37:31-34   (CRASH! *The brothers lie about what happened to Joseph and tell their dad he was killed by wild animals.*)

Genesis 39:1-20    (CRASH! *Joseph is wrongly accused and put in prison.*)

There is a lot that is broken in this story... it's a good thing that God is an expert in making all things new! Let's see how God puts things back together. In each section below use colorful crayons or markers to highlight what God is doing.

Genesis 39:21-23   (God was with Joseph even in prison and made him prosper)

Genesis 40:1-15    (God gave Joseph the ability to interpret the cupbearer's dream)

Genesis 41:1-36    (God revealed the meaning of Pharaoh's dream through Joseph)

Genesis 41:37-43   (Because of God's gift, Joseph is made second in command over Egypt)

Genesis 42:6-9     (God made Joseph's dream come true and brought his brothers to him)

Genesis 45:1-7     (*Joseph says that God sent him to Egypt to provide for the family*)

Genesis 47:11-12    (*Through Joseph, God settles the family in Egypt with plenty of food*)

Ask the whole class to look up Genesis 50:19-20. This is what Joseph says to his brothers when they are still afraid years later that Joseph will be mad at them for what they did. Encourage the kids to use the stickers from the back of the Bible to place next to these verses. (They may choose to put a sticker there indicating that they like this verse or they memorized it or that they don't get it or how it makes them feel... etc.)

**Activity:**

Even though Joseph's brothers intended to harm Joseph, God used the whole situation for good. Sometimes there are things that happen in our lives too that are bad or difficult situations that God turns into something good. Today's activity is a scavenger hunt for stories of how God has done just that in the lives of people in this congregation. During the remainder of your class time, send the students out to interview adults that they find around the church. (You may choose to have some "plants" in the church that morning who you have prepared in advance to be ready to answer the students question.) A sample question the students might ask would be, "We are learning about Joseph in Sunday School today. Joseph's brothers meant to hurt him, but God used it for good. When has God turned something bad or hard in your life into something good?" Have the students take their Smash Books with them and record the answers that they hear. Set a time limit so students know when they need to be back. (This doesn't need to take a long time to be effective.)

As students come back to the room, encourage them to think about a time when they too have seen something hard or bad turned into something good by God. Have them share their interviews and experiences as they make any notes they wish to in their Smash Books. (You may wish to provide some smaller pictures of mosaic art or torn pieces of tissue paper they can use to recreate the idea of something broken made into something beautiful in their books.)

As an optional fun and very special treat, consider serving "Broken Glass Jello" as a snack at some point during today's lesson or while the kids are finishing up the work in their journals.



# Broken Glass Jello



## Ingredients:

4 small boxes (3 oz. each) of Jell-O or store brand "gelatin dessert" in different colors. (strawberry, lime, orange and blue are pictured here.)

1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk (don't get evaporated milk)

2 envelopes unflavored gelatin (that Knox stuff)

## Directions:

For each flavor, dissolve **one 3 oz box of jello in one cup of boiling water.** (IGNORE THE BOX INSTRUCTIONS TO USE MORE WATER!) Pour into a container and chill for at least 3 hours. After chilling the four flavors, cut them into small blocks. Carefully mix the blocks together in a 9 x 13 pan.

In a separate bowl, sprinkle 2 envelopes unflavored gelatin into 1/2 cup cold water. After the gelatin blooms (or absorbs water), add 1 1/2 cup boiling water and dissolve. Add the can of condensed milk. Stir and cool. Pour cooled milk mixture over jello and chill overnight. (Skim off the bubbles for a nicer finished product.) Cut into squares and serve.

# Large Group Closing

Start with playing a VBS song as kids gather (especially good ones would include “Stand Firm”, “Through it All”, “Watching Over You”)

When everyone has gathered, ask for help putting the word “Reconciliation” up on the word wall. Ask if anyone knows the meaning of that word. (Giving or receiving forgiveness for hurts we have caused or that have been done to us.) With the help of the kids, share how today’s story is a story of reconciliation because Joseph gave forgiveness and the brothers received forgiveness. Remind the kids that we know a song about confessing our sin and receiving forgiveness. Sing “If We Confess Our Sins.”

God was with Joseph and helped him to forgive even when he was sold to traders and taken to Egypt. Tell the kids that you know a song that is a Bible verse about knowing that God is with us wherever we go. Introduce the song: “Wherever You Go.”

Close by praying the Lord’s Prayer together. (It may help to go slow and have the kids repeat back the lines one by one if necessary.