



Family Matters



A CHRIST-CENTER RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS

CHILDREN YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO KNOW

Meaningful lessons that children in the Bible can teach our children today.

Learning to Forgive

It is hard to forgive someone who hurts us in a deep way, especially when you didn't really do anything to provoke them. Sometimes, the hardest people for you and I to forgive are those closest to us — our friends and family.

Forgiveness is something that a young man named Joseph learned the hard way. Joseph was the 11th of 12 sons belonging to Jacob. His brothers perceived that he was the favorite of their father.

One day, their father sent Joseph out to where his brothers were tending their flocks. As they saw him approaching, they plotted to kill him. They grabbed him and threw him in a dry well. As they sat down to eat, a traveling caravan came upon them. His brothers sold Joseph to these passing travelers who took him along with them to Egypt, where they eventually sold him to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard.

The Lord was with Joseph in Egypt, as he served in the house of Potiphar. Joseph prospered and had success, but he also was wrongly accused and imprisoned. While in jail, Joseph was able to correctly interpret the dreams of those around him, and he was eventually brought to Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. From Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph predicted seven years of abundance in the land of Egypt, followed by seven years of famine. He advised Pharaoh to plan for the famine by storing up the grain from the years of abundance. Impressed with his insight, Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be in charge of preparing for the lean years by managing the resources of the seven years of abundance.

As predicated, the famine hit the land, and it was terrible all over the world. Joseph was now the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all the people. People traveled from far and near to buy grain in Egypt. Joseph's brothers went down to Egypt to purchase grain; when



they arrived, they did not recognize their brother — but he recognized them.

After a series of strange encounters, a trip back home and a return trip to Egypt, Joseph finally revealed himself. The brothers feared for their lives. They thought that now their brother Joseph, a powerful ruler of Egypt, would surely seek revenge for the harm they did to him as a boy. But this was not what Joseph did.

He told them to go home and bring their father back so the entire family could be reunited. Joseph gave them land and provided for them until the time of his death. Summarizing this crazy series of events, Joseph said to his brothers, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gen. 50:20).

It's hard to forgive. Forgiveness doesn't come naturally. It takes effort to forgive. God can take even the worst situations and create a new and right spirit within us, where forgiveness becomes real and genuine — even within our own family.

FAMILY LINKS: Activities for families to reinforce Bible story truths in the home.

Gather the family together for a time of Bible study and discussion. Follow the outline below.

Opening Prayer:

Given by the family member who most recently got a new coat.

Family Share Time:

Encourage family members to share their responses to the following situations.

In which situation would it be hardest for you to forgive someone?

- A person stole your bike.
- Somebody hit you on purpose.
- Someone took your money.
- A friend said bad things about you.

Family Bible Time:

A recap of the story of Joseph from Genesis 37–50.

Read by a parent, with the rest of the family repeating each line. Or both parents can alternate reading each sentence.

Joseph was the 11th of Jacob's 12 sons. He was the favorite by far.

His dad gave him a cool coat of many colors. His brothers didn't like it that he was the family star.

Joseph had crazy dreams. He said that one day his brothers to him would all bow down.

They hated him, planned to kill him but sold him to merchants passing by from out of town.

Joseph wound up in Egypt and was very blessed by God, but also was wrongly put in jail.

Yet he thrived behind bars, interpreted the Pharaoh's dream and came up with a plan to not let the country fail.

The Pharaoh trusted Joseph. He was put in charge of saving food for the years ahead.

His very own brothers came to buy some grain, for the drought was such a dread.

At first, the brothers didn't recognize him as a leader in the land, but Joseph knew them all on sight.

He sold them grain, sent them on their way but launched a plan to bring them back without a fight.

Finally, he told them who he was. At first, the brothers were scared for their very life.

But Joseph had forgiven them. He wanted them to be together as a family and to not feel any more strife.

Joseph didn't see all this as bad. In fact, he saw that God intended these things for a greater good.

Forgiveness is what we have in Christ. Forgiving others is what God calls us to do willingly, not just because we should.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How do you think Joseph felt when his brothers sold him as a slave?
- 2) How do you think Joseph felt when he was wrongly put in jail?
- 3) How do you think Joseph felt when Pharaoh put him in charge of taking care of the grain supply?
- 4) What do you think it was like for Joseph to see his brothers again?

Further Study: Read Gen. 50:15–21.

- 1) Why were Joseph's brothers afraid of him after their father died?
- 2) What did they say to Joseph?
- 3) What did Joseph say to them?

Closing Thought: Read by a member of the family. *Forgiveness is hard. We don't always do it naturally. Because Christ died on the cross, God forgives us all of our sins. We can also forgive others. We can say kind words instead of harsh words. We can forgive others when they do wrong and say bad things about us. We can show the love of Christ to others. We can trust that God can take bad things and work them for good.*

Concluding Family Litany of Forgiveness:

Have a parent read the following open-ended statements, pausing to let family members speak their answers aloud or silently in their hearts.

Let us pray...

Lord, forgive me for saying...

Lord, forgive me for wanting...

Lord, forgive me for thinking...

Lord, forgive me for not doing...

Lord, forgive me when I...

Lord, forgive us all of our sins in the name of Jesus, who died on the cross so that we could be forgiven. Amen.

Family Matters

Vol. 19 • No. 6 • February 2015

Family Matters is an LCMS School Ministry newsletter Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
314-965-9000 • www.lcms.org
Writer: Dr. Steve Christopher Designer: Carolyn Niehoff

TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

