God helps us help others.

Bible Verse
“He [God] is our help and our shield” (Psalm 33:20b).

Growing Closer to Jesus
Children will
- share about times they’ve helped others,
- learn about how God used Joseph to save Egypt from starvation,
- act out the story of Joseph’s interpretation of dreams, and
- plan ways to help family members.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis
■ Joseph interprets dreams and saves Egypt.

Genesis 40:1–41:57
God had a plan for Joseph and continued to fulfill that plan even when Joseph was in prison for something he hadn’t done. It was with God’s help that Joseph interpreted some dreams and eventually gained his release.

Pharaoh’s “wise men” were people he paid to advise him, and they often claimed supernatural powers. However, they had no idea how to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams. Only God can truly interpret dreams, and Joseph was God’s instrument. Not only did Joseph interpret the dreams, but he also advised Pharaoh how to avoid devastation in Egypt.

Think about Joseph’s opportunities to reject God. It would have been easy to give up on God when his brothers sold him into slavery. When God allowed him to be unjustly imprisoned, Joseph could have given up on God. And when he was elevated to second in command in the kingdom of Egypt, Joseph could have felt he no longer needed God. But because Joseph remained true to God, God was able to use him in mighty ways to help others.

Prayer
- Read Matthew 10:42.
- In what practical ways can you serve “a cup of cold water” to the students in your class?
- Pray: God, I want to help these little ones. Help me see through your eyes as I… Help these children understand that they are not too little to help others, and that they can rely on you for guidance.
Before the Lesson
- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use. Refer to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies columns to determine what you’ll need.
- Make photocopies of the “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for the children who will be attending your class.

This Lesson at a Glance

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*See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.*
Welcome Time

**SUPPLIES:** “Heart Name Tags” (p. 23), markers, pins or tape
- Bend down and make eye contact with children as they arrive.
- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- As children arrive, ask them about last week’s lesson or take-home page. Use questions such as “What did you tell your family about Joseph in prison?” or “How did God help you in hard times this week?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that **God helps us help others.**
- Hand out the heart name tags children made during Lesson 1, and help them attach the name tags to their clothing. Have extra heart name tags on hand for children who weren’t in class last week or to replace name tags that were damaged.
- Direct children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.

Let’s Get Started

Set up one or more of the following activities for children to do as they arrive. After you greet each child, invite him or her to choose an activity.

Circulate among children to offer help as needed and to direct their conversation toward today’s lesson. Affirm children when you see them helping each other. Use affirmations such as “You’re being a good helper” or “I can see that you enjoy helping others.”

**Option 1: Help Me**

**SUPPLIES:** blocks

Have children work together in pairs to build a tall tower of blocks. If the tower falls over, encourage the partners to help build it again. Suggest that the children take turns adding one block at a time. As children work together, have them think of ways to help, such as balancing the tower, handing blocks to their partners, or picking up fallen blocks. Remind children that **God helps us help others.**

**Option 2: When I’m Big**

**SUPPLIES:** job-related clothes or equipment such as hats, briefcases, and aprons

Provide job-related clothing or equipment, such as police hats, stethoscopes, sports equipment, briefcases, hard hats, and aprons. Tell children that today they’ll learn what Joseph grew up to be. As children play with the items, encourage them to talk about what they want to be when they grow up. Tell children that people have jobs so they can help others. Remind them that **God helps us help others.**
Option 3: How Many Grains?

**SUPPLIES:** oats, bowl, clear plastic jar with lid, paper, pencil

Have children help each other count out oats. Tell them that today’s Bible story is about a time Joseph collected a lot of grain. Help children write the number of oats they’ve counted on a piece of paper and then place the oats in a plastic jar. Have the children go around the room and ask others to guess how many oats are in the jar. Encourage children to cheer if someone guesses the number correctly. Tell the children that today they will hear a story about someone who stored up lots and lots of grain like the oats.

When everyone has arrived and you’re ready to move on to Bible Story Time, encourage the children to finish what they’re doing and get ready to clean up.

Pick Up Our Toys

**SUPPLIES:** CD player

Lead children in singing “Pick Up Our Toys” (track 2) with the CD to the tune of “Skip to My Lou.” Encourage children to sing along as they help clean up the room.

You’ll be using this song each week to alert children to start picking up. At first they may need a little encouragement. But after a few weeks, picking up and singing along will become a familiar routine.

If you want to include the names of all the children in the class, sing the song without the CD, and repeat the naming section. If you choose to use the CD, vary the names you use each week.

**SING**

We will pick up our toys.
We will pick up our toys.
We will pick up our toys
And put them all away.

There’s [name] picking up toys.
There’s [name] picking up toys.
There’s [name] picking up toys,
Putting them all away.

(Repeat.)

Bible Story Time

Setting the Stage

**SUPPLIES:** none

Tell the children you’ll clap a little rhythm to get their attention. Explain that when you clap, the children are to stop what they’re doing, copy the rhythm you clapped, and focus on you. Plan to do a couple of clapping rhythms each time so the children will have to listen carefully in
order to copy what you clapped. Practice this signal a few times. Encourage children to respond quickly so you’ll have time for all the fun activities you’ve planned.

Hide the *glow ball* behind your back, and then sit in a circle on the floor with the children. Ask the children to tell you about the Let’s Get Started activities they chose. Say: *I was watching as you played and worked together. I saw such good helpers! Everyone seemed to be helping each other and having a good time. Today we’re going to learn how God helps us help others. Let’s start by helping our class make up a dream.*

Hold up the *glow ball* and say: *We’ll pass around this glow ball as we make up a dream. I’ll start telling about the dream, and then I’ll pass the ball to [name of child sitting beside you]. [Name] will add one sentence to our dream. We’ll go all the way around the circle. Let’s see what a funny dream we can help each other make.*

*I had a dream that there was a fuzzy panda bear in my bed, and it said…* Pass the ball to the child sitting next to you, and have him or her continue adding to the dream. When the ball has traveled all the way around the circle, ask:

- *Did this dream make sense? Why or why not?* (No, because we made it up; no, because our dreams aren’t real; no, it was too silly.)

Say: *Our dream doesn’t make sense because we made it up. But the Bible tells us about some dreams that did make sense. Today we’re going to learn how God used Joseph to help some important men understand what their dreams meant. Let’s bring out our Bible so we can hear that story now.*

Put the *glow ball* away and out of sight.

### Bible Song and Prayer Time

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, construction paper, scissors, CD player, basket or box

Before class, make surprise cards for this activity by cutting construction paper into 2x6-inch slips. Prepare a surprise card for each child plus a few extras for visitors. Fold the slips in half, and then stamp the *camel stamp* inside one of the surprise cards. Bookmark **Genesis 40:1–41:57** in the Bible you’ll be using. Return the *camel stamp* and the *ink pad* to the Learning Lab.

Have children sit in a circle. Say: *Each week, someone will bring me the Bible marked with today’s Bible story. As we sing our Bible song, I’ll pass out surprise cards to see who the Bible person will be. Don’t look inside your surprise card until the song is over.*

Lead children in singing “Read God’s Book” (track 3) with the CD to the tune of “The Muffin Man.” As you sing, pass out the folded surprise cards.

**SING**

Now it’s time to read God’s book,  
Now it’s time to read God’s book.  
Let’s hear a Bible story.  
(Repeat 3x.)

After the song, say: *You may look inside your surprise cards. The person who has the camel stamped inside his or her card will be our Bible-bringing person for today.*
Identify the Bible person. Ask the Bible person to bring you the Bible. Lead the class in clapping for the Bible person, cheering, and making fun applause sound effects by slapping your thighs with your palms. Help the Bible person open the Bible to the marked place, and show children where your story comes from. Then have the Bible person sit down.

Say: [Name] was our special Bible person today. Each week, we’ll have only one special Bible person, but each one of you is a special part of our class! Today we’re all learning that God helps us help others.

Let’s say a special prayer now and ask God to show us how we can help others. I’ll have my helper pass around this basket. When the basket comes to you, put your surprise card in it and say, “God, please help me help others.”

Have your helper pass around the basket or box. When you’ve collected everyone’s surprise card, set the basket aside, and pick up the Bible. Lead the children in this prayer: God, thank you for the Bible and for all the stories in it. Teach us today that you help us help others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

**Hear and Tell the Bible Story**

**SUPPLIES:** Bible

Sit with children in a circle on the floor. Open the Bible Big Book: Joseph, the Favorite Son, and hold it up. Say: Let’s remember what we’ve learned about Joseph so far. Our Bible Big Book shows us pictures of our Bible story about Joseph! As we look at each picture, I’ll tell you what I think happened in that part of the story. If I say something wrong, point your finger up in the air and say, “Not so fast, partner!”

“Not so fast, partner!” Then tell me what really happened. Read the following statements for the indicated page of the Bible Big Book:

- Page 1: A man gave his sheep named Joseph a beautiful coat because the sheep could add two and two. (“Not so fast, partner!” A man gave his son named Joseph a special coat because he loved him so much.)
- Page 2: Joseph’s brothers were jealous, so they threw him into a deep hole. (true)
- Page 3: Joseph wrapped his brothers up in blankets and tied them to the back of his camel. Then they all went to the beach for a picnic. (“Not so fast, partner!” Joseph’s brothers sold him to slave traders.)
- Page 4: Joseph joined the circus and learned how to balance trays of food on his shoulder. (“Not so fast, partner!” Joseph became a household slave and had to do lots of chores.)
- Page 5: Someone told a lie about Joseph, so Potiphar threw Joseph in prison. (true)

Don’t show pages 6-7.

When you have finished reviewing the story, set the book aside, and bring out your Bible, open to Genesis 40. Say: Let’s see what the Bible tells us about how God helped Joseph help other people. You can help me tell the story by acting out words in the story. When I say “jail,” put your hands together at the wrists. When I say “dream,” put your hands together, and lay your head on your hands like you’re asleep. When I say “God,” point up to heaven. When I say “cows,” moo loudly. Let’s practice those.
Practice the actions and words a few times until the children are comfortable with each action. Then read the following story, pausing each time you say the words jail, dream, God, or cows.

Say: **Joseph was in jail.** And even though the jail keeper liked Joseph and let him be in charge of the prisoners, Joseph wanted to be free.

One day, two new prisoners came. They’d been servants of the king of Egypt. But the king got mad at them and threw them in jail. Joseph noticed that the two men seemed upset. So he asked them, “What’s wrong?”

The two men said, “We’ve had dreams, and we don’t know what they mean.”

“Tell me your dreams,” said Joseph.

So the two men told Joseph. Then Joseph said, “God is the one who understands dreams. Maybe God will help me tell about your dreams.”

With God’s help, Joseph told the two men what their dreams meant.

Joseph said to one of the men, “Since I have told you about your dream, when you go back to the king, tell him I haven’t done anything wrong. Please tell the king to let me out of jail.”

One of the men promised to tell the king, but he forgot. Then one day, the king had a dream that he didn’t understand. One of the men who had been in jail with Joseph said, “Oh! I remember someone who can help you! His name is Joseph.”

“Send for him!” demanded the king. Show page 6 of the Bible Big Book.

They let Joseph out of jail and brought him to the king. The king said, “I had a dream. Can you tell me what it means? Can you help me?”

Joseph answered, “God can help me tell about your dream.”

The king said, “I dreamed that seven skinny cows ate seven fat cows. But the skinny cows didn’t get any fatter. Then I dreamed that seven skinny ears of corn swallowed seven fat ears of corn. But the skinny ears of corn didn’t get any fatter. What do these dreams mean?”

God helped Joseph know what the king’s dreams meant. “There will be seven years of good crops and lots of food in Egypt. Then there will be seven years of bad crops and no food in Egypt. God wants you to save up grain in the good years so no one will have to go hungry.”

The king said, “Will you help us, Joseph? God has shown you all this, and there is no one as wise and understanding as you are.” Show page 7 of the Bible Big Book.

Joseph said he would help the people. So the king put Joseph in charge of storing up the grain. God used Joseph to save the people of Egypt.

Tell children they may stop doing their actions. Then ask:

- **Where was Joseph when he helped some men understand their dreams?** (He was in jail.)
- **What did Joseph ask the men to do when they got out of jail?** (To tell the king he was not guilty and wanted to get out of jail.)
- **What happened to the king that he needed help with?** (He had some dreams that he didn’t understand.)
- **How would you feel if you had to tell the leader of your country about his or her dreams?** (Scared; excited; nervous; a little afraid.)
- **Why do you think God helped Joseph understand the king’s dreams?** (God loved Joseph and wanted him out of jail; God wanted everyone to have food.)
Say: Joseph could have gotten in a lot of trouble with the king if God hadn’t helped him understand the king’s dreams. But God protected him and kept him safe from harm. That reminds me of what our Bible verse today says about God. Let me read it to you.

Open your Bible to Psalm 33:20b, and show children the verse. Say: Listen to what Psalm 33:20b says: “He [God] is our help and our shield.” Wow! God stands between us and trouble, just like a shield! God helped Joseph, and God helps us. And because we know we have God on our side, we can help other people!

Ask: • When has God helped you help others? (At home with my family; at school; when I’m with my friends.)

Say: God helps us all the time. But God helps us help others, too.

One way God really helped us is by sending Jesus to be our special friend. When Jesus lived on earth, he helped lots of people—hurt people, sad people, lonely people. And Jesus still helps people today! God wants us to help, too.

Ask: • Who do you know who is sad, or hurt, or lonely? (My sister is sick; my friend is lonely.)

• How can you help them? (I can draw a picture; I can ask them to play.)

Say: We can try to be like Jesus and look for ways to help other people. Let’s play a helping game. Return the Bible Big Book to the Learning Lab.

Do the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: masking tape

Say: In the king’s dream, skinny cows gobbled up the well-fed cows. Let’s play a game and pretend we’re cows. I’ll choose one person to be the Skinny Cow and one to be the Well-Fed Cow. The Skinny Cow will try to tag the rest of us and may move around the room only by taking slow, giant steps. The Well-Fed Cow will try to help the rest of us and may move around the room only by hopping. The rest of us will be a herd of cows that try to keep away from the Skinny Cow while tiptoeing. If the Skinny Cow tags you, you must go into the corral.

Designate a corner of the room as the corral, and put masking tape across the corner to form the boundary of the corral. Then continue: The Well-Fed Cow will help us by sneaking into the corral and setting us free by tapping us. If the Well-Fed Cow gets caught by the Skinny Cow, the whole herd must go to the corral at once!

Play for a few minutes, and then choose a new Well-Fed Cow and Skinny Cow. When you’re ready to move on to the next activity, clap your hands and wait for children to respond. Then say: Let’s be quiet little cows and tiptoe to the tables. That was a fun game of helping each other escape from the corral. I can tell you’re learning that when God helps us help others, helping can be fun.
Closing

Work Out

**SUPPLIES:** small broom or dust cloth, handkerchief or small scarf, CD player

Bring out Pockets the Kangaroo. Pockets will need a small broom or dust cloth in her pouch and a handkerchief or small scarf tied around her head. Go through the following script. After you finish the script, put Pockets away and out of sight.

**Pockets:** (Taking out broom or dust cloth, sweeping or dusting) Work! Work! Work! That’s all I ever do at my house!

**Teacher:** Pockets, what’s wrong?

**Pockets:** (Shaking head and sounding upset) Do I have to do everything?

**Teacher:** Pockets, what are you upset about?

**Pockets:** My parents! (Sweeping again) They make me do all the work at my house!

**Teacher:** Oh, really? (Gently stop the broom.) Do they make you cook dinner every night?

**Pockets:** (Shaking head slowly) No.

**Teacher:** Do they make you do the laundry and wash the car?

**Pockets:** No. (Sets the broom down.)

**Teacher:** Do they make you buy all the groceries and take out the trash?

**Pockets:** (Excitedly nodding head, and then shaking it, and then nodding) Yes! I mean, no! I mean, yes!

**Teacher:** Well, Pockets (straightening Pockets’ head scarf), what do you mean?

**Pockets:** I mean, I do have to take out the trash.

**Teacher:** So you don’t do all the work, do you?

**Pockets:** No. But I don’t like helping. (Shakes head emphatically.)

**Teacher:** Well, maybe our class can help you. Children, can you tell Pockets what we’ve learned today about helping others? (Lead children in telling Pockets how God helped Joseph know what Pharaoh’s dream meant.) You see, Pockets, when we help others, it makes us feel good. Even if it’s hard work helping others, it feels good to be helpful. And God promises to help us to help others. Let’s all say our Bible verse together. (Lead the children in saying the Bible verse.) ‘He [God] is our help and our shield.’

**Teacher:** We also have been learning a song about how God will help us. Would you like to help us sing it?

**Pockets:** That would be great! (Lead the children and Pockets in singing “God Is Our Help” (Psalm 33:20), track 5 on the CD.)
God Will Help Us

SUPPLIES: CD player

Have children sit in a circle. Place a pile of shiny streamers in the middle of the circle, and then say:

Let’s think of things we can do to help our families, friends, teachers, and neighbors. Each time you tell a way to help someone, take a streamer.

Allow children to share ways they can help, such as doing the dishes, cleaning up their rooms, being kind to brothers and sisters, raking leaves, erasing the chalkboard at school, or comforting a sad friend. When each child has at least one streamer, say:

God helps us help others. Let’s pray and ask God to help us remember all the ways we can be helpful.

Pray: Dear God, thank you for always being with us and helping us. We thank you for showing us ways to help others, too. In Jesus’ name, amen.

After you say “amen,” invite children to toss their streamers into the air.

Say: Before we go, you can help me clean up the streamers while we sing our song about how God will help us.

Lead children in singing “God Will Help Us” (track 4) with the CD to the tune of “Frère Jacques.” Be sure children put the shiny streamers away while they sing.

Sing

We can depend on the Lord alone to save us.
Only he is the one who will protect us.
Like a shield that will not budge,
He is watching over us.
Every moment of the day,
He keeps us safe.

(Repeat.)

I can depend on the Lord alone to save me.
Only he is the one who will protect me.
Like a shield I cannot see,
He is watching over me.
Every moment of the day,
He keeps me safe.

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Pockets: (Excited and happy) I see now! When God helps me help my family, it makes the work seem nicer. It helps my family feel good—and I feel good, too!

Bye, friends. Thanks for teaching me that God helps us help others.
God will help us.
God will help us.
Yes, he will.
Yes, he will.
If we ask for God’s help,
He will come and help us.
Yes, he will.
Yes, he will.
(Repeat.)

Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this week’s topic.
**Lively Learning: Jailbreak**

Use small, foam balls or crumpled newspapers to play this game. Direct children to all stand along one wall of the classroom. This will be your jailhouse, and children will pretend to be Prisoners. Choose one child to be “It,” and have that child toss balls at the Prisoners. Any person a ball touches can break out of jail and run to help “It” toss the balls. Play the game until the last Prisoner makes his or her jailbreak, and then talk with the children about what it might have been like for Joseph in jail.

**Make to Take: Grain Stores**

Before class, make colored rice by mixing a small amount of food coloring with some rubbing alcohol in a shallow bowl. Stir in the rice, and then pour the rice onto paper towels to dry. Make several colors of rice, and place each color into a different container. Set out the containers, and help children put the rice into baby-food jars or other clear containers. Encourage children to layer their rice to create colorful designs. As children work, talk about how Joseph stored up grain similar to rice to help save his people from starvation. Remind the children that God helps us help others.

**Treat to Eat: Black-Spotted Cows**

Pour a bag of small chocolate chips into a bowl. Give each child a banana half, a craft stick, and a paper plate. Have children peel their bananas and push them onto craft sticks to create “banana-sicles.” Then show children how to press some chocolate chips onto their banana-sicles to make “black-spotted cows.” Distribute napkins, and let children eat their creations. Remind children of the dream about the skinny cows who swallowed up the fat cows just as children are swallowing up their bananas.

**Story Picture: Joseph the Helper**

Give children each a photocopy of the “Today I Learned…” handout. Set out craft-stick halves, glue, and crayons. Have children glue the craft-stick halves to the grain silos in the picture. Then have them color the rest of the picture. Encourage children to look for ways to help each other as you remind them that God helps us help others.

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For Extra Time

If you have a long class time or want to add additional elements to your lesson, try one of the following activities.

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Today your child learned that God helps us help others. Children heard a story about how Joseph helped the Egyptians save food. They talked about ways they could help their families and others.

Verse to Learn

“He [God] is our help and our shield” (Psalm 33:20b).

Ask Me...

- How did Joseph help the people of Egypt?
- How do you help people with actions and kind words?
- How can our family help one another this week?

Family Fun

Set up this “Feast or Famine” activity for supper one night. Give some family members very little to eat, such as one pea and a bite of a pork chop. Give other family members too much to eat. See if your family can figure out a solution to the problem. Reapportion the food, and then talk about how God gave Joseph the wisdom to figure out tough problems. Pray and ask God to give your family wisdom to solve problems and help each other.

Joseph the Helper (Genesis 40:1–41:57)