



Bible Point

God helps us in hard times.

Bible Verse

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

Growing Closer to Jesus

- Children will
- talk about hard times they’ve had,
 - learn that Joseph was thrown into prison, and
 - ask God for help in hard times.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

- Joseph goes to prison because a woman lied about him.

**Genesis
39:7-23**



The first thing that stands out in today’s passage is the integrity that Joseph exhibits. He’s been sold as a slave by his own brothers, and now here he is, a captive in a foreign culture far away from home. How easy it would be to relax one’s beliefs and do what’s easiest. But instead Joseph resists the temptation and refuses to do something that would damage his relationship with God. Notice that it wasn’t just a one-time temptation.

Potiphar’s wife kept after him “day after day.”

Putting Joseph in prison, especially in “the house of the captain of the guard”—a nicer place than the worst prison—was a mild punishment for what he’d been accused of. Perhaps Potiphar was suspicious that Joseph wasn’t the one at fault. Whatever the human reason was for the leniency, we know that the power behind Potiphar’s humane treatment of Joseph was God at work, helping his servant through a rough time. Even in the prison, “the Lord was with Joseph” (Genesis 39:21).

We don’t know how long it took for the warden to notice Joseph and to raise him to a position of authority, but apparently the warden even saw that something supernatural was happening—he trusted Joseph to the point of putting him in charge. The Egyptian prison warden saw that “the Lord was with [Joseph] and caused everything he did to succeed” (Genesis 39:23).

Prayer

- Read John 14:27.
- Reflect on how God’s peace has been real to you at a time of trouble.
- Pray: Thank you, God, that you are with me in my times of need. Help me see you in tough times like... Lord, help the children in my class see that you will be with them when they face hard times.

**teacher
tips**

This lesson focuses on the aspects of this Bible story that are appropriate for 5- and 6-year-olds. The story focuses on Joseph in jail. If children ask why Joseph went to jail, say that Joseph went to jail because someone lied about him. If you feel you want to give children more specific information, simply say that Potiphar’s wife asked Joseph to do something wrong and he refused, so she lied to get him in trouble. Through this story, children can learn a great lesson—that God will help them when they’re experiencing hard times.

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

	What Children Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Learning Lab Supplies
Welcome Time	Welcome! —Receive name tags, and be greeted by the teacher.	"Heart Name Tags" (p. 23), markers, pins or tape	
Let's Get Started Direct children to one or more of the optional activities until everyone arrives.	Option 1: All Keyed Up —Try to find the right key to unlock a lock.	Padlocks, keys, key chains	
	Option 2: Jail Tag —Play a game of Tag, and go to jail when they are tagged.	Masking tape	
	Option 3: Jailed —Pretend they're in prison as Joseph was.	Tape, black crepe paper, table	
	Pick Up Our Toys —Sing a song as they pick up toys, and gather for Bible Story Time.	CD player	
Bible Story Time	Setting the Stage —Talk about hard times they've experienced.	Pocket Bible, CD player	
	Bible Song and Prayer Time —Sing a song, bring out the Bible, and pray together.	Bible, construction paper, scissors, CD player, basket or box	
	Hear and Tell the Bible Story —Listen to a story from Genesis 39:7-23 about Joseph being thrown into prison.	Bible	
	Do the Bible Story —Make pictures to take home to remember God's help in hard times.	Yarn, construction paper, markers, scissors, glue	
Closing 	Hard Times —Talk with partners about hard times they may be having.	Bible, "Hard Times" pictures (p. 53), scissors, tape	
	God Will Help Us —Sing a song about God helping them.	CD player	

Welcome Time

SUPPLIES: “Heart Name Tags” handouts (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 as a slave?” or “How did God help you do your best this week?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that ► God helps us in hard times.**
- 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 any 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 the children to offer help as needed and to direct their conversation toward today’s lesson. Ask questions such as “How would you feel if you were in jail?” or “How would you feel if someone lied about you?” or “Tell me about a time when God helped you.”

■ Option 1: All Keyed Up

SUPPLIES: padlocks, keys, key chains

Set out several padlocks and key chains with several keys, including the keys to the padlocks. Encourage children to try each of the keys until they find one that opens a lock. After children open the lock, talk with them about what it would be like to be locked up in jail. Explain that today’s Bible story is about a time when Joseph was locked up in jail.

■ Option 2: Jail Tag

SUPPLIES: masking tape

Use masking tape to mark off a corner of your room to be a jail. Choose one child to be the Jailer. The Jailer will try to tag other children. If a child is tagged, the tagged child can point to someone else and say, “Put him [or her] in jail instead!” The named child will have to go to jail instead of the tagged child. Children can free others from jail by holding their hands and saying ► God helps us in hard times. After a few minutes of play, choose a new child to be the Jailer and play again.

After the game, talk to children about how it felt to have to go to jail even when they weren’t tagged, and how it felt to get out of jail. Tell them they will learn today about someone who was sent to jail even though he did nothing wrong.



Vary the activities you use. Remember that children learn in different ways. The more senses you can involve, the more children will learn. By including a variety of Let’s Get Started activities each quarter, you’ll be able to reach children of all learning styles and developmental abilities.





You can also make a jail-like setting out of large boxes. Children can take turns crawling in and out of the boxes.

■ Option 3: Jailed

SUPPLIES: tape, black crepe paper, table

Tape strips of black crepe paper around the edges of a table. Encourage children to play around and under the table, pretending the table is a jail. As children play, ask them what they think jail might be like. Talk about people they might meet and things they might smell or hear in a jail. Tell them that today's Bible story is about a time when Joseph was put in jail.

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: Pocket Bible, CD player



Tell children you'll clap a little rhythm to get their attention. Explain that when you clap, 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.

Have children form a circle, and then ask:

• **What did you make or do when you arrived today?** (We played jail tag; I unlocked the lock; we pretended we were in jail.)

Say: **Some of you tried to unlock locks, some of you played Tag, and some of you pretended you were in jail. You didn't all get a chance to do everything, but that's OK. You were all learning important things about today's Bible story. We're going to hear about a time Joseph was put in jail. Joseph didn't deserve to be in jail. It was a hard time. Even when Joseph went to jail, God helped him. ►God helps us in hard times. Our Bible verse tells us ►"He [God] is our help and our shield" (Psalm 33:20b). God was the only one who could help Joseph during his hard time. Say the Bible verse with me as you point up to God.** Lead the children in saying the Bible verse, ►"He [God] is our help and our shield." Say: **We also have a song that will help us remember that God is the one who helps us in hard times. Let's sing our song.**



◀ BIBLE VERSE

Lead the children in singing "God Is Our Help" (Psalm 33:20) (track 5).



**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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Give each child a small handful of *shiny streamers*. Say: **I'm going to read some hard things that might have happened to you. If I read something that's happened to you, place one of your streamers on the floor in front of you.**

Read the following list slowly. After you read each item, allow time for children to lay down their streamers.

- **Your friend got mad at you.**
- **You were scared in your room at night.**
- **Your pet died.**
- **Your parents had a fight.**
- **You got in trouble at school or church.**
- **Someone told a lie about you.**

After you read the whole list, collect the streamers, and then ask:

- **How do you feel when hard things happen to you?** (Sad; mad; scared.)
- **What do you do when hard things happen to you?** (I talk with my parents; sometimes I cry; I pray.)



Say: **Hard things even happened to Jesus. He really understands what it is like to go through hard things. Sometimes when hard things happen to us, we feel better if we tell someone what happened. We can tell Jesus what happened, too, because he will understand. Jesus knows that ► God helps us in hard times.**

Ask: • **What do you think Jesus did when he faced hard times?** (Maybe he cried or talked to his friends; maybe he prayed.)

• **What hard times would you like to tell Jesus about?** (My bad dreams; when I got in trouble at school.)

Say: **Our Bible friend Joseph had a very hard thing happen to him. We'll hear about that in our Bible story time today. But first let's see if our friend Pockets is around.**

Encourage children to help you call out for Pockets. Bring out Pockets with a pocket Bible in her grasp. Then go through the following script with Pockets. After you finish the script, place Pockets out of reach but not out of sight.

Liar, Liar!

Teacher: Pockets, what are you doing with that pocket Bible?

Pockets: Well, reading it, of course. That's why I came to church today—to learn about the Bible. And this Bible is just my size! (*Pockets turns a few pages and then continues.*) Liar, liar, pants on fire! (*Shocked, take the Bible from Pockets.*)

Teacher: Pockets! What are you doing? The Bible is God's Word. Everything in the Bible is true.

Pockets: Of course the *Bible* is true, but I was reading our Bible story about Joseph, and there's a liar in it. And because of the lie, Joseph was put in jail!

Teacher: What happened to Joseph in jail?

Pockets: Well, that's the cool part. Even though Joseph was in jail, God still took care of him. God helped him through his hard time!

Teacher: Yes, God was always with Joseph. After we sing our Bible song, we'll listen to the whole Bible story and hear what happened to Joseph. Do you want to stay and listen?

Pockets: (*Nodding*) You bet! I want us all to find out what happened to Joseph!

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■ 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 cards in half, and then stamp the *camel stamp* inside one of the surprise cards. Bookmark **Genesis 39:7-23** 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,
Read God's book, read God's book.
Now it's time to read God's book.
Let's hear a Bible story.**

(Repeat 3x.)

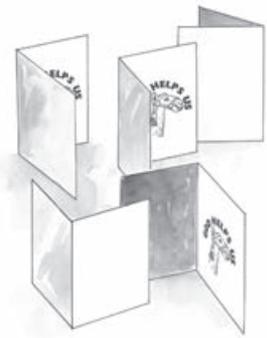
After the song, say: **You may look inside your surprise cards. The person who has the camel stamped inside his or her card will be our Bible-bringing person for today.**

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 in hard times.**

Let's say a special prayer now and ask God to help us in all our hard times. 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 in hard times."

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 children in this prayer: **God, thank you for the Bible and for all the truth in it. Teach us today that ► you help us in hard times. In Jesus' name, amen.**



■ Hear and Tell the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: Bible

Open the Bible to **Genesis 39:7-23**. Say: **Our story comes from the Bible, God's special book. Listen carefully, and I'll tell you what happened to Joseph.**

Tell the Bible story using the puppet script. Have Pockets ready to respond at the end of the story. After the story, put Pockets away and out of sight.

Hard Times

Teacher: When Joseph went to Egypt, he worked for a man named Potiphar. All the time Joseph worked in Potiphar's house, God helped him do his very best. Because Joseph was good at everything he did, Potiphar put Joseph in charge of everything in his house and everything he owned.

One day, Potiphar's wife asked Joseph to do something wrong. Joseph said, "No way!" That made Potiphar's wife angry, so she told a lie about Joseph. Potiphar believed the lie and threw Joseph in jail.

Poor Joseph! He had worked hard. He had done a good job. And now he was in jail. Joseph was having a very hard time!

Pockets: I can't believe Joseph's having so much trouble!

Teacher: I agree, Pockets. What an awful thing to happen to Joseph! It just isn't fair! *(To children)* How do you think Joseph felt when he had to go to jail? *(Pause.)* What would you have done if you had been Joseph? *(Allow children to answer.)*

Pockets: *(Hopping up and down angrily)* If I were Joseph, I'd hop right out of that jail. Joseph is a good guy. He shouldn't have to go to jail.

Teacher: But that's not the end of the story. When Joseph went to jail, the guard liked him and made him the boss of all the prisoners. Even when Joseph was in jail, God helped him. God helped Joseph during his hard time, and ► God helps us in hard times, too.

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teacher tips

To refocus children if they become distracted, use a child's name and ask a direct question. You might say, "Cody, how do you think Joseph was feeling when he was sitting in jail?"



■ Do the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: yarn, construction paper, markers, scissors, glue

Before class, cut 6-inch lengths of yarn, at least five pieces per child.

Give each child a piece of construction paper. Set out markers and glue.

Ask: • **What do you remember about the story we heard about Joseph?** (Joseph said no to doing wrong; Joseph was put in jail.)

Say: **Good job remembering, everyone! Let's make story pictures. When it's your turn, you can use the *camel stamp* to make pictures in the middle of your paper. Then you can use the markers to make smiling faces, frowning faces, scared faces, or mad faces. The faces can help you remember all the feelings Joseph felt during hard times, and the stamp will remind you that God helps us.**

After that, we will glue the yarn over the faces to make a little "jail," to help us remember that even though Joseph was in jail, God helped him. ► ***God helps us in hard times, too.***

Have children take turns using the *camel stamp* and *ink pad* to stamp camels on their piece of construction paper. Assist children with gluing the yarn to form the bars of the jail cell around the faces they draw.

When everyone's story picture is complete, ask:

- **What hard things happened to Joseph?** (He was put in jail; his brothers sold him as a slave.)
- **What hard things have happened to you?** (My friend moved away; my brother fights with me; I got in trouble for doing something wrong.)

Say: **God was with Joseph during all his hard times, even when he was in jail. That was a hard time for Joseph because he hadn't done anything wrong. But God was with Joseph, and God is with us, too, during our hard times. Let's thank God for always being there for us.**

Lead children in a simple prayer of thanksgiving: **Dear God, thank you for always being with us, in good times and in bad times. We love you, God. Thank you for loving us! In Jesus' name, amen.**

Closing

■ *Hard Times*

SUPPLIES: Bible, "Hard Times" pictures (p. 53), scissors, tape

Before class, cut out the school, family, and friends images from the "Hard Times" pictures, and post them in three different corners of the room.

Have children stand as a group in the center of the room. Say: **In the corners of our room, I've put up three different pictures. Look at them and tell me what they are.**

Wait for children to find and identify the pictures, and then say: **There are pictures of a mom and kid—a family, a school, and two friends playing together. Let's go to the family, the mom and child, corner first.**

Lead children to the family corner, and then have children form pairs. Say: ► ***God helps us in hard times.* I want you to think about a hard time you're having in your family. Maybe your parents are arguing, you are sick, or you're having a hard time getting along with a brother or sister. When you've thought of your hard time, raise your hand.**

When all the children have raised their hands, say: **Now each of you is going to talk to your partner about your hard times. When I clap my hands, I'd like the partner who's wearing darker clothes to tell about the hard time he or she thought of.**



If the *ink pad* is dry, moisten it with three to five drops of water.




teacher tips

If you have two or more helpers, or if you feel the children in your class are mature enough to guide themselves through this activity, let children choose the corner they'd like to go to. Have the children in each corner form pairs, then give both partners a turn to talk. If children are interested, let them choose corners one or two more times.

Clap your hands, and allow about 15 seconds for children to tell about their hard times. Then clap your hands again. Say: **Now it's your partner's turn to share.**

After about 15 seconds, clap your hands again. Lead children to the school corner, and have them sit down with their partners. Say: **Now we're in the school corner. Think about a hard time you're having at school or even maybe here at church. Maybe someone is making fun of you, you're having a hard time with reading, or someone doesn't want to be your friend. Raise your hand when you've thought of a hard time at school or church.**

When all the children have raised their hands, say: **Now I'd like the partner who is wearing lighter clothes to tell about the hard time he or she thought of.**

Clap your hands, and allow about 15 seconds for children to tell about their hard times. Then clap your hands again. Say: **Now it's your partner's turn to share.**

After about 15 seconds, clap your hands again. Lead children to the friends' corner, and have them sit down with their partners. Say: **Now we're in the friends' corner. Think about a hard time you're having with your friends. Maybe some friends are leaving you out, you're having a hard time making friends at school, or your friends won't share with you. Raise your hand when you've thought about a hard time with your friends.**

When all the children have raised their hands, say: **Now I'd like the partner who's wearing the most buttons to tell about the hard time he or she thought of.**

Clap your hands, and allow about 15 seconds for children to tell about their hard times. Then clap your hands again. Say: **Now it's your partner's turn to share.**

After about 15 seconds, clap your hands again. Say: **Now I'd like you to stand up, give your partner a hug, and say to your partner, "God helps you in hard times."**

Have children hug their partners, and then encourage them to hug other friends in the class. After about a minute, clap your hands to call the children back together.

Say: **We all go through hard times. I'm so glad we all have God to help us! Listen to what the Bible says about God's help.** Open your Bible to **Psalm 33:20b**, and show children the verse. **In Psalm 33:20b, the Bible says, ►"He [God] is our help and our shield." That's great news!**

BIBLE VERSE ►

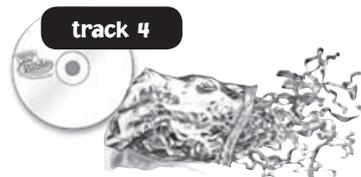
Ask: • **What does a shield do?** (Protects people; keeps you from getting hit by something.)

• **How is God like a shield for us?** (He protects us; he keeps us safe; he keeps bad things away from us.)

Say: **God is like a shield because he protects us from all kinds of dangers. God keeps us safe and helps us when we're in trouble or when we're going through hard times. God helped Joseph when he was going through hard times, and God will help us, too! Let's thank God for helping us!**

■ God Will Help Us

SUPPLIES: CD player



With children gathered in the center of the room, say: ► **God helps us in hard times. Let's use these streamers to thank God for helping us.**

Give each child a single strand from the *shiny*



streamers. Say: **When you're going through a hard time, you may feel all alone, like your one little streamer. But you're not alone! God is with you, and ►God helps us in hard times.**

Give each child another streamer strand, and help children tie their strands together. Say: **Now your streamer isn't alone. And you're never alone during hard times, either, because God is right there to help!**

Have children shake the streamers. Lead children in saying "Yeah, God!" and in repeating the Bible Point. Say: **Now let's say a prayer together and ask God to help us.** Have the children fold their hands, holding the streamers.

Pray: **Dear God, there are so many things that are hard for us. We need your help. Thank you for helping us in hard times. In Jesus' name, amen.** Have the children shake their streamers again and say: **Thank you, God!**

Before we go, let's sing our song about God's help to remind us that ►God helps us in hard times.

Lead children in singing "God Will Help Us" (track 4) with the CD to the tune of "Frère Jacques."



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.



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.

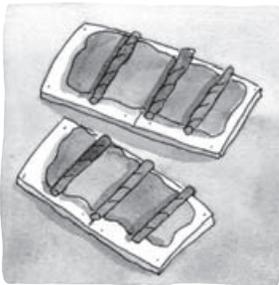
■ **Lively Learning: Hard Times Relay**

Play this version of a relay race. Have children form two teams, and have one half of each team line up at opposite ends of the room. Hand a short length of chain to the first child in each line on one side of the room. Each of these children should walk quickly (no running) to the first person in his or her line across the room, handing the chain to that child while calling out, ► *“God helps us in hard times!”* The child who handed off the chain goes to the end of the line, while the child with the chain goes across the room to the first person in the line. Again the child calls out ► *“God helps us in hard times!”* Continue until all children have had a chance to carry the chain. After the game, lead the children in a prayer, thanking God because he is with us in hard times.

■ **Make to Take: Rough Pictures**

Give each child a sheet of fine sandpaper, and set out crayons. Have children each draw on the sandpaper a picture of a hard time they’ve had. Have children tell you how God could help them in those situations. Talk with the children about how hard times can be like rough paper. God can help us make something wonderful from hard times.

■ **Treat to Eat: Jail Crackers**



Have children form three groups: the Cracker Breakers, the Frosting Spreaders, and the Licorice Cutters. Give graham crackers to the Cracker Breakers, and have them break the crackers in half. As they finish breaking the crackers, have them pass the crackers to the Frosting Spreaders.

Give plastic knives and bowls of frosting to the Frosting Spreaders. Have them spread the frosting on the crackers and then pass them to the Licorice Cutters.

Give plastic knives and black licorice ropes to the Licorice Cutters. Have them cut the licorice into cracker-sized pieces and then attach the pieces to the frosting and crackers to make jails.

As children enjoy the treats, have them talk about what prisoners may have eaten in jail during Joseph’s time.

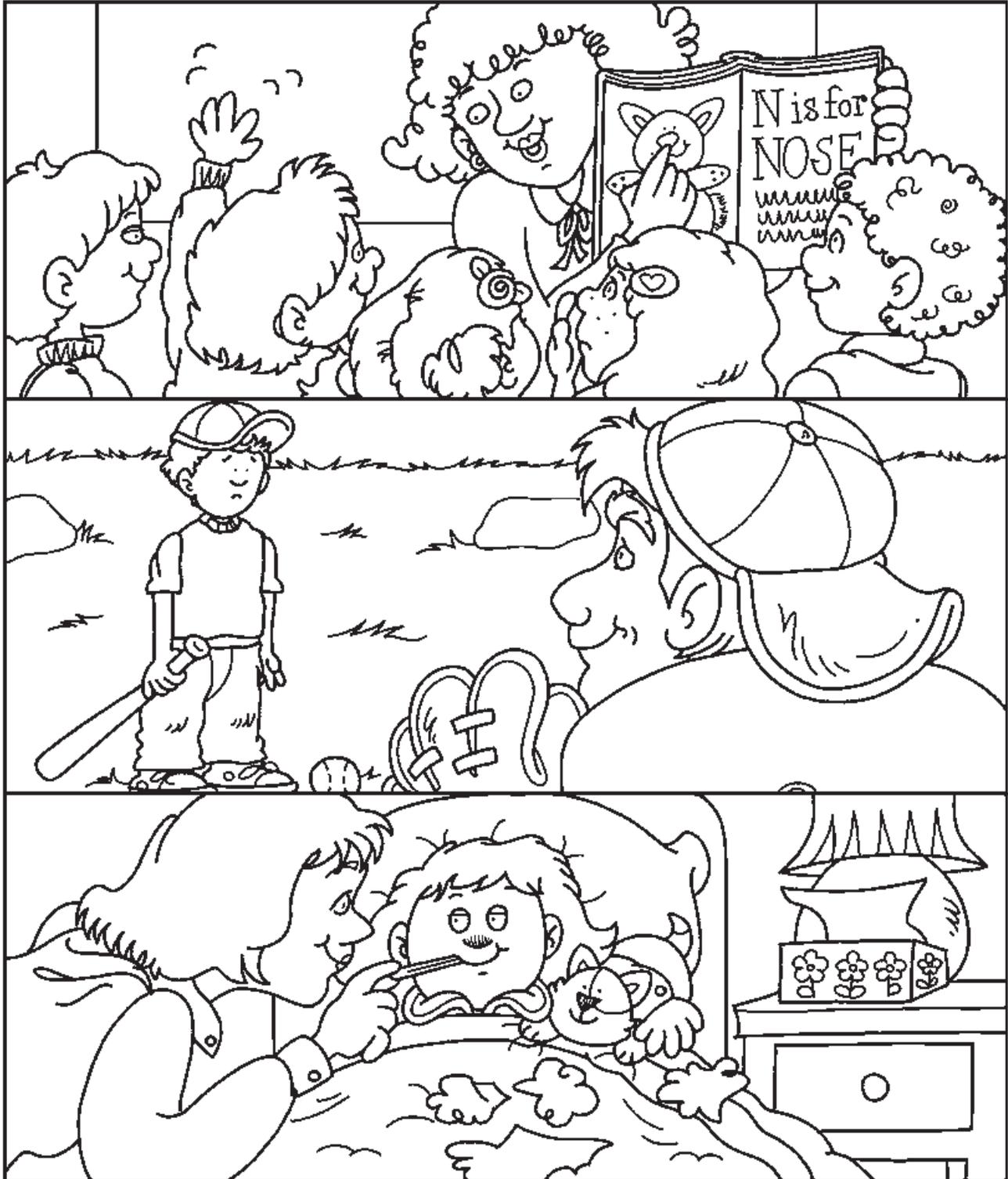


■ **Story Picture: Joseph in Jail**

Give each child a photocopy of the “Today I Learned...” handout. Set out black tempera paint and paintbrushes. Help children roll up their sleeves or put on paint shirts. Have children paint bars over the picture of Joseph as though he were in jail. Talk to children about what life in prison may have been like for Joseph. Remind them that ► *“God helps us in hard times.”*

Hard Times

Photocopy and cut out these images. Post the images in three different corners of your classroom.



Today I learned...

God helps us
in hard times.

Today your child learned that God helps us in hard times. Children heard about a woman who lied about Joseph. They talked about hard times they're facing and asked God to help them.

Verse to Learn

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

Ask Me...

- What happened to Joseph?
- How do you feel when something hard happens to you?
- How can our family help each other in hard times?

Family Fun

- Read about how Joseph got sent to prison (Genesis 39:7-23). Talk about what it might be like for a prisoner in jail today. Then put together a care package for a child whose father or mother is in jail. To find out where to send your package, call Prison Fellowship Ministries at (877) 478-0100. Or find them online at prisonfellowship.org.

Joseph in Jail (Genesis 39:7-23)

