

**TEXT** Genesis 39:1-6,19-23

**OBJECTIVE** The students will be able to recount how Potiphar's wife lied about Joseph and caused him to be put into prison. They will understand that God was always with Joseph, even in times of trouble.

**MEMORY VERSE** Fear not: for I am with thee. — Isaiah 43:5

# Joseph in Prison

## MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

**FEAR NOT** — Place hands in front of face, move back (afraid).

**FOR I** — Point up.

**AM WITH** — Fists touching chest, palm to palm.

**THEE** — Point to others.

## MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

A stone prison is the visual representation of this week's memory verse. (See pattern at the end of this lesson.) Cut apart the three pieces on the heavy black lines. Put the arrangement back together, one section at a time, as your students learn the verse.

## BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Use the prison provided as a Memory Verse Visualized pattern at the end of the lesson as your opener for this class session. Ask the students to identify what the picture is, and then imagine how they might feel if they were put into prison. Briefly review the events of the past two lessons, helping the students see several occasions where Joseph might have been frightened. Bring out how God was with Joseph in each situation.

1. Joseph was sold to a man named Potiphar in Egypt, and he served his master faithfully and well.
2. Potiphar's wife told a lie about Joseph.
3. When Potiphar heard this lie, he became very angry with Joseph.

**Climax:** Joseph was put into prison because of the lie. But even there he did what was good and right in God's sight.

**Conclusion:** Even though this seemed like another hard situation for Joseph, God was still with him.

**Response:** The students will be able to relate the fact that God was with Joseph in prison to the fact that He will also be with us in every time of need, if we are doing what is right in His sight.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Joseph, having been sold into slavery by his brothers, was bought in the slave market by an officer of

Pharaoh, an Egyptian named Potiphar. The word "slavery" does not occur at all in the King James Version because both the Hebrew and the Greek words involved are more often rendered "servant."

A slave's life in Egypt was usually lived in hopelessness and despair. Few ever had days off or any vacations. They expected only that their days would be filled with endless chores and probably difficult, exhausting work, often made worse by beatings and privations. Joseph, however, proved to be so intelligent and trustworthy that his master, in time, put him in charge over all his household. God was with Joseph, and Potiphar's affairs prospered under Joseph's administration.

Because of false accusations brought against Joseph by Potiphar's wife, Joseph was cast into prison. *Justice* in ancient times often meant "guilty until proven innocent." The person suspected or accused of a crime was thrown into prison to await a trial which usually was slow in coming or maybe never took place. The accused often languished in prison for years in the company of robbers, murderers, and the insane. The dungeons were dark and clammy, no toilets, and the stench unbearable. Sickness and disease was rampant, often claiming the lives of the prisoners before they ever came to trial. Many prisons offered no food or water to prisoners and they would survive only if family or friends brought them food.

Even as God had kept and blessed Joseph before, and had given him favor with Potiphar, He brought him to the favorable attention of the prison keeper. This man, finding that he could have complete confidence in Joseph, put into his charge all the other prisoners. God is able to provide and care for His children no matter what the outward circumstances of their life may be.

## IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Use the picture of a man (see Patterns). Let the children paste strips of paper vertically in front of him to look like prison bars.

Make a set of prison bars and figures of Jesus and Joseph from construction paper (see Patterns). Cut out and fold the prison bars as shown. Cut out the figures of Joseph and Jesus which are attached to the paper strip. Put both figures "in prison." The Jesus figure should be kept hidden from sight as the story is told. At the appropriate point in the story, pull the tab and bring the figure of Jesus into view to show that He was with Joseph. Tell your class that Jesus is with us wherever we are and will help us if we trust Him.

Make a set of puzzle squares for each child in your class (see Patterns). Copy each puzzle onto heavy paper, cover it with clear contact paper, cut it into squares, and store it in a Ziploc bag. The puzzle contains pairs of key words from this lesson. As the children match each word, have them tell you what part of the lesson the word reminds them of.

Use the picture of Joseph in prison (see Patterns). In the upper right part of the picture cut the flap on three sides, leaving the top intact as a hinge. Behind this flap paste a picture of Jesus. Lift the flap to show God's presence was with Joseph even in time of trouble.

## QUESTIONS

Do you ever feel that things are not fair? Do you think Joseph felt this way? How do you react? How did Joseph react?

Has anyone ever told a lie about you? How did you feel?

How do you know God is with you when you have to face difficult times? Tell about a time that God was with you.

How did the prison keeper show that he trusted Joseph? What can we do so that people will trust us?

Would prison be the place you would choose to put Joseph? Why or why not?

Why do you think God allowed Joseph to be put into prison?

In talking about Joseph the Bible says, ". . . that which he did was made to prosper." Explain what that means.

Why do people who love God sometimes have hard times?

What does it mean to trust God to take us through difficult times?

How does God turn one's bad times into good times?

## PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Give each child a copy of the prison and two finger puppets representing Joseph and Jesus (see Patterns). Fold the prison on the dotted lines and glue the tabs together at the sides. Tape the tabs of the finger puppets together to fit the children's fingers. As they put Joseph into the prison, explain that Jesus was also there with him, even though Joseph couldn't see him.

Give each of your students a copy of the Joseph in prison lacing-card (see Patterns). Also give them a length of black yarn that can be laced through the holes to make prison bars for Joseph. (Don't worry if the bars end up a little crooked!)

As you talk about how Joseph may have been lonely and afraid while in prison, mention times when little children might feel afraid. Ask the children if they have any fears. Emphasize that God is always with us. The "Jesus Watches Over Me," Cut and Color Book by Standard Publishing, is an excellent illustration source for this thought.

Make a prison guard out of a short cardboard tube (see Patterns). Tell how the main jailer learned to trust Joseph so much that he didn't need any guards. He put Joseph in charge of the other prisoners!

## REVIEW IDEAS

Use verse 23 of the text to explain Joseph's character. "The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his [Joseph's] hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper." Even though Joseph was in prison, the jailer knew he was a good person. He put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners. And he didn't even check up on what Joseph did! Joseph could have used this opportunity to escape or to get all kinds of favors for himself, but he only did what was right. He did what God wanted him to do. Present optional endings to Joseph's situation; such as, using the jailer's trust in him to escape, to get extra food or privileges, or to charge the other prisoners money for favors. Would God have blessed Joseph in these cases?

Emphasize how in all ages of life we feel a need for comfort and security. Bring in a toddler holding a teddy bear. Talk about how that child really wants to have the bear in bed with him at night. Bring in two older children, arm in arm, and talk about how friends can offer security. Then bring out that even a teddy bear or the best of friends cannot always be with us or really help us in the time of trial. But God can! He was with Joseph throughout all of his trials, and He has promised to be with us too.

## SUPPORT MATERIAL

Jesus Watches Over Me — Cut and Color Book,  
Standard Publishing  
I'm Not Afraid — Standard Publishing 2873 (a book)

## MEMORY VERSE SONG



Fear not, fear not: for I am with thee: Fear not for I am with thee.



Fear not, fear not: for I am with thee: Fear not for I am with thee.

## MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

