

Joseph's

Bad Day

The Point: God is in control.

Scripture Connect: Genesis 37:12–36

Supplies for all Session 2 activities options: pencils, prepared poster, Bible, 1 quarter for each child to keep, paper, popped popcorn, 1 clean bed-sheet or blanket

The Basics for Leaders

When Joseph hiked out to check on his brothers, he was a favored younger son—one wearing an expensive coat and a big grin. By nightfall, Joseph was almost naked and was a slave on his way to Egypt. Joseph had been betrayed by his own brothers. Now that's a bad day ... or was it?

Fast-forward a few years and Joseph himself tells his brothers it was God who sent him to Egypt, and they didn't need to be angry with themselves for what they'd done in getting him there (Gen. 45:5).

Yes, it was a bad day when Joseph was dragged into slavery. And when his brothers stripped him and sold him like an unwanted donkey, Joseph felt the pain. But God did something amazing with Joseph's bad day just as he can do something amazing with ours.

Today you'll help your kids discover what Joseph discovered: in the end, God is in control.

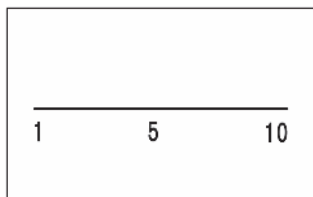
OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

HOWZITGOIN’

Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: pencils, prepared poster

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.



Say: **If this past week was so awful you wish you’d slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there’s no such thing as a week that’s exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids’ lives.

OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

NOT SO FAST!

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: none

Ask children to pick partners.

Say: **I want you to find ways to make a situation worse. For example, if I say, “We went to the beach and the water was warm” you might say, “Not so fast! The shark that ate Lenny thought the water was warm too!”**

No matter what I say, with your partner find a way to turn it into a disaster. And always begin with “Not so fast!” Ready? Let’s go!

After reading each of the following statements, pause to let pairs respond. Move quickly from one statement to the next. Add more statements of your own if you wish.

- My new bicycle is right outside.
- Our teacher is really good—I'm learning a lot.
- My family's taking a trip to the mountains.
- Our team has won six games in a row.
- You're invited to my birthday party!

When finished, invite partners to give each other high fives. Then ask children to sit in a circle and discuss:

- If you could get a “do over” on any day in your life, what day would you pick—and why?

Say: Sometimes tough days happen. What starts out positive and fun can sometimes end in disaster. We wish we could control those days, but we can't. In the Bible, Joseph discovered something we'll discover too: though we're not in control, God is. He's even in control when our days are dark and difficult.

Joseph started a day by taking a walk in the sunshine, going off to see his brothers. By the end of the day, he'd been stripped of his fine clothes and sold into slavery. Joseph discovered that he didn't have control over the situation, but God did! Let's dig deeper to see what we can control and what we can't—and what God can control.

AGE-ALERT TIPS

If you have mostly **early elementary children**, substitute the following, easier situations:

- On my new bicycle, I can ride fast.
- My puppy likes to lick my face.
- I have an ice cream cone with five scoops stacked up.
- I hit a baseball at Mrs. Lillicut's house.

Bad Days Game

MONKEY FACE

Time: 5 minutes or more, as desired

Supplies: none

Say: When you look in a mirror and make a face, the mirror makes a face right back at you—even if it's a funny face, like a monkey face.

Ask children to find partners and stand facing their partners. Say: **Whoever has the darkest shoes will go first in this exercise. You'll move and your partner will mirror what you do. What you do is up to you. Make a monkey face like this.** (demonstrate) **Or jump.** (demonstrate) **What you do, your partner will do. You have 30 seconds. Go!**

After 30 seconds, have partners switch roles. Then have kids be seated and ask:

- **Which was most fun: leading or following? Why?**
- **Which was easier: leading or following? Why?**

After kids answer, say: **It's fun to be in charge when you get to call the shots. You know what's coming next. You get to do what you want. But are we ever really in control or in charge? Let's see what we can learn from Joseph about being in control!**

Bad Days Bible Story

JOSEPH CIRCLE

Time: about 15 minutes

Supplies: Bible

Ask children to go to the center of the room and stand in a circle, facing inward, and with about a foot between kids.

Say: **Let's find out what happened to a man named Joseph. He lived hundreds of years before Jesus was on the earth. Joseph had 10 older brothers, and they all hated him because Joseph was his father's favorite. Joseph was treated better than his brothers. Plus he tattled on his brothers. And in his dreams, which he shared with his brothers, he was always in charge of them. How would you feel about your brother or sister if all that happened?** (pause for responses)

I'll read what happened to Joseph. When you hear something you think made Joseph's day a good one, take a half step forward. If you hear

AGE-ALERT TIPS

If you have mostly **older children** (4th, 5th, and 6th graders), modify the lesson in these ways:

Alert #1: Pass the Bible around so children can read the passages aloud.

Alert #2: Add this as a last debriefing question: *How might your life be different if you gave more control to God?*

something you think made Joseph's day a bad one, take a step backward. We may not all agree what's good and bad, or move at the same time, but that's fine. We'll see where we end up.

Read aloud Genesis 37:12–14, 18–24, 28. Pause to let children see where they're standing. Say: **Looks like we think Joseph had a tough few days.**

As a group, still standing where you are, discuss:

- **How much control over what happened do you think Joseph had?**

Say: **Joseph's story doesn't end there. He was sold to an important man in Egypt, jailed for something he didn't do, noticed by Pharaoh, and freed. He even saw his brothers again.**

Read Genesis 39:1–4, 20–22; 41:41–43; 45:1, 5, 8. Have kids continue stepping forward or backward as you read. Then see where children are standing now.

Say: **Joseph may not have been in charge, but God was. God saved thousands of lives through Joseph in Egypt, something Joseph couldn't have done unless he'd been dragged to Egypt.**

Ask children to sit in a circle and discuss:

- **How much control do you think God had over what happened to Joseph?**
- **Why is it better for God to be in control than for us to be in control?**
- **What are things that God controls in our lives?**
- **What's one thing you could change that would give God more control in your life?**

CLOSING PRAYER

COIN-FLIP PRAYER

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: 1 quarter for each child to keep

Give each child a quarter. Ask children to try and flip their coins and catch them in the air. If some children don't know how to do this, ask older kids who have developed the skill to demonstrate.

After several flips, invite children to form pairs. Say: **Let's flip coins at the same time and see what comes up: heads or tails. If it's heads, tell your partner about a tough thing that happened this week. If it's tails, tell your partner about something fun that happened this week. If you tie, flip again!**

Give partners time to flip their coins several times and share. Then say: **Keep your fists closed so nobody can tell which hand you're using to hold your coin. If you feel you're having mostly tough days lately, hold the coin in your right hand. Everything seem easy this week? Place the coin in your left hand. Now close your eyes and pray with me.**

Dear God, you're in control of both our easy days and the tough ones. That's a hard truth for us. Please help us trust and know that you're in control even when things are difficult. Like Joseph, we want to serve you well on all of our days, whether they're hard or easy ones.

In Jesus's name, amen.

Tell kids to keep the quarters as reminders that God is in control even when our days might be tough or frustrating. Ask children to pray during the week whenever they take out the quarters from their pockets.

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

BRING IT IN FOR A LANDING

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: 1 sheet of paper per child

Give each child a sheet of paper and this challenge: in two minutes, craft a paper airplane to launch toward a wastebasket target on the other side of the room. The goal: bring your plane in for a landing inside the basket. (If you have younger kids, pair them with older kids who know how to fold paper airplanes.) Have kids explain their designs before launching their planes. Then, taking turns, send the creations off into the wild, blue yonder. See who comes closest to the target. Then discuss the following:

- **What helped the winning plane have more control than the others?**
- **What helps you have self-control in your life?**
- **Why is letting God have control of your life a good idea?**

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 2**POPCORN CATCH**

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: popped popcorn, 1 clean bedsheet or blanket

You may want to cover the carpet with a clean bedsheet or blanket before trying this. Check with the person in charge of the place where you're meeting!

Give each child five kernels of popped popcorn. Demonstrate how to toss a piece in the air and catch it in your open mouth—or how to *almost* catch it there. Your kids will catch on!

Explain that the goal of this activity is to have enough eye-hand-mouth control to snag five out of five kernels. After kids have tried out their popcorn-catching skills, serve more popcorn and discuss the following questions:

- **What helps someone get better as a popcorn catcher?**
- **What helps us do a better job of letting God have control of our lives?**

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 3**INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW**

Time: 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **If you were being dragged off to Egypt as a slave, how certain would you be that God was in control? Why?**