



# FREEDOM SUNDAY

GOD'S PEOPLE  
WORKING TOGETHER  
TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING



NAZARENE  
COMPASSIONATE  
MINISTRIES

YOUTH LESSON



# YOUTH LESSON

Human trafficking is a difficult topic to learn about as an adult, let alone as a child. Keep in mind where children are developmentally in order to keep conversations appropriate. Here are some concepts to keep in mind while discussing human trafficking:

- Although people sometimes do things that hurt others, we should not stereotype certain kinds of people. There is not one race, gender, or socioeconomic level that abuses more than others, so avoid stereotypes.
- Our world is a broken place, yet God is good. God has placed the church —God’s people— in the world. We are here to help bring God’s healing and redemption to a broken world.
- There’s a difference between reporting about a crime and gossiping about someone.
- We all play a role in ending human trafficking. Being in a group that respects others as individuals made in God’s image is where it starts.
- Redemption is available to everyone — the exploited and the exploiter.

This lesson focuses on human trafficking through a study of Joseph’s story. You can use this lesson as a longer Bible study or Sunday School lesson, or you can choose pieces for a shorter session.

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**“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of the sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”**

— Luke 4: 18-19 (NIV)



**Lesson:** Human Trafficking

**Big Idea:** God can bring good out of bad situations

**Response:** Trust God, even in hard situations

Intro Activity: Mystery Picture

Bible Story: Joseph, Genesis 37, 39-44, and 45:1-15

Application Activities: Bible Questions, Life Map, Recruiting Techniques, Wrap It Up

## DID YOU KNOW?

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery.

The United States is a source, transit, and destination country of human trafficking, for both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals (those living here who are not citizens). Children and adults are forced to do work such as cleaning homes or hotels, farming, serving in restaurants, construction, and selling magazines. Others are exploited through sexual abuse. Cases of trafficking have been reported in all 50 U.S. states.

## LEADER PREP

Joseph's story is one of much heartache and then redemption. Please read through Genesis chapters 37, 39-44, and 45:1-15. In all of the betrayal and hatred Joseph experienced, we can see an example of how God was present during Joseph's difficult days and how God brought good out of something that was meant for evil.

In the Bible, Joseph's story is a detailed account of an early example of human trafficking. He was sold into slavery by his brothers. Today, people are lured into false employment, sexual abuse, and exploitation through a variety of techniques. Most often victims are lured by traffickers through lies and false promises. The trafficker may promise a romantic relationship, work, or money to build a false sense of trust. Other victims are abducted or forced into prostitution or other types of labor by threats against the victim or his/her family; other, like Joseph, are sold by a family member. Once a victim is under the trafficker's control, threats, violence, fear, and even false guilt can keep him or her from leaving. Most of the time, the chains that hold a victim are not physical chains, but psychological—a mixture of fear and love—making this a complicated issue.

With advances in technology, traffickers can recruit their victims online through the use of social networks or in chat rooms, as well as in person at clubs, on the street, through friends, and in shopping malls. Sometimes traffickers use other children to recruit their friends at school or in after-school programs. They seek out those who are most vulnerable and lacking in self-confidence. Traffickers often target children who are living in poverty or are living in dysfunctional family situations and seeking love. Children who have already been the target of sexual abuse are at increased risk.

The trafficker isn't always a stranger; often he or she is a family member, friend, or love interest.

As you prepare to teach your students, ask God to help you share this story with them in a way that will show them God's love and His plans for them.

Teacher Note: Remember, this lesson is a guide, so adapt it to the style and needs of your group. Be sure to make time for Application Activity 3 to reinforce the Big Idea and Response.

**Intro Activity:** Mystery Picture

**Supplies:** Mystery pictures

**Instructions:** Show the group a selection of close-up mystery pictures such as those available at [www.mysteryphotos.com](http://www.mysteryphotos.com). Have them guess what each picture is, then show the answers. Explore why it is more difficult to identify the object based on only a part of the image.

**Explain:** Sometimes our lives are like that. We only see a part of our lives and only part of what is going on around us. But we know that God sees and knows everything—what's going on now, what we're going to be doing tomorrow, and what we're going to be doing 10 years from now. God is always at work in our lives, no matter what is happening. God is always with us, God always loves us, and God always has a plan for us.

## BIBLE STORY

### Creative Storytelling Ideas:

- Ask students to give a “thumbs up” when something good happens to Joseph and a “thumbs down” when something bad happens. (Alternatively, give each student a small flashlight or penlight and ask them to turn them on when something good happens and off when something bad happens.)
- Bring a few things to wear as you tell the story that will help show Joseph's different roles. Switch what you're wearing as Joseph's roles change in the story. For example:
  - o Nice jacket for favorite son (any nice jacket you have)
  - o Ratty T-shirt for slave
  - o A big key chain lanyard for leading Potiphar's household
  - o Handcuffs for being in jail OR orange shirt/pants to look like a jumpsuit
  - o A nice suit coat or button-up shirt and tie for being second in command under Pharaoh
- Make double-sided labels to use as you tell the story; tape the labels on your body (or on a volunteer). Then, at the end of the story when you begin to share how God views us, turn each label over and ask someone to read it aloud. You can mention that even though Joseph had all those labels, he didn't take them on as his identity. He stayed focused on the names God gave him.

*For Labels: Side A (labels others gave Joseph): 1) Favorite son, 2) Hated brother, 3) SOLD, 4) Slave, 5) Liar, 6) Prisoner.  
Side B (labels God gave Joseph): 1) Loved, 2) Chosen, 3) FREED, 4) My child, 5) Blessed 6) Forgiven.*

## Ideas for smaller groups:

- Have the students read selected sections of the Scripture out loud together: Genesis 37:3-4, 18-28; 39:1-5. Use the script to explain the story with Potiphar's wife, and then read 39:21-23; 41:14-40. Conclude with Joseph forgiving his brothers in the script.
- Give each student one of the labels listed below (activity pages) with the negative sides up. At the end of the story, have everyone flip the label over and share what God thinks of us on the backside.

## LESSON SCRIPT

In the Bible, we find a story about human trafficking. It's the story of a teenager named Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers. Can anyone explain what the phrase "human trafficking" means?

Human trafficking is the illegal trading, selling, and exploitation of people. It's a process by which a person's freedom is taken away and that person become enslaved by others. Human traffickers use force, fraud, and/or coercion to gain and maintain control over another person. Men, women, and children can all be victims of human trafficking.

Today we're going to learn more about what human trafficking is and how we can help stop it. Let's jump in and see what happens in the first recorded story of human trafficking and what God has to say about it.

How many of you have a brother or sister? Raise your hand if you have one or more siblings; keep your hand up if you have two or more (keep this up until everyone's hand is down.) Well, in our story today there was a boy named Joseph and he had 11 brothers—that is one big family! Joseph was the youngest of the brothers and his father's favorite. (Not cool, Dad.)

Joseph's father showed how much he loved Joseph by giving him a beautiful coat of many colors. Joseph's brothers were envious and hated him. I don't know if you have ever had these feelings before, but they don't work out well, and they sure didn't work out well for Joseph's brothers. Hatred and envy are going to cause some big problems in this family.

One day, Joseph's father sent him to check on his brothers and see if they were doing a good job or not. They worked in the field with sheep. Joseph's brothers saw him coming from a long way off. They had let their hatred and envy grow for a long time and decided to kill Joseph.

When Joseph got to his brothers, they grabbed him, tore his coat off, and threw him into a deep pit. Then they saw a group of traders from another country coming by, selling merchandise, and they made a new plan. They decided to sell Joseph to the traders as a slave. The brothers kept his coat so they could lie and tell their father that a wild animal had killed Joseph.

Joseph was sold by his own family! How do you think Joseph felt at that time? I can't imagine how betrayed and hurt he must have been. The one group of people who were supposed to love him didn't. They hated him and sold him to a place where they knew he would be beaten and treated horribly. Sometimes those who should protect us and love us betray and hurt us the deepest. If you've ever felt that way, you are not the only one. It happened to Joseph, too.

Let's see what happens next.

The traders took Joseph to Egypt and sold him as a slave to a man named Potiphar. But God was still with Joseph. Even when everyone else betrayed him, God didn't. God helped Joseph to be a good worker, and Joseph was successful in everything he did. Even though his situation was difficult, Joseph worked hard and earned his master's respect. He had every right to be mad and refuse to work, but he didn't, and God rewarded him for it. Potiphar recognized that God was with Joseph, and he put Joseph in charge of his entire household.

Someone else also noticed Joseph. Potiphar's wife saw Joseph and thought that he was very handsome. To her, it didn't matter that she was married; she wanted Joseph to have an inappropriate relationship with her. This made Joseph very uncomfortable and he said no because he knew it would be wrong and would not honor God. Day after day she kept asking him, and each time Joseph kept saying no. But one day as he was doing his work she grabbed a hold of his coat. Joseph ran out of the house, leaving the coat behind. Then Potiphar's wife got angry; she didn't like being rejected. She called all the other slaves together and lied to them and to her husband. She said that Joseph had tried to force her to do things she didn't want to do. Potiphar believed his wife and had Joseph thrown in prison.

But even through this unjust situation, God was with Joseph. While he was in prison for the crime he didn't commit, he met two guys. These two guys had bad dreams and God helped Joseph understand what their dreams meant. Much, much later after the other prisoners were freed, one of them was able to recommend Joseph to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, when he also had a bad dream that he did not understand. God also helped Joseph know what Pharaoh's dream meant. The dream was a warning from God. He was saying that there would be seven years with lots of food and water and then seven years of nothing—famine. The Egyptians needed to use the seven years of plenty to save up food for the seven years of famine.

Pharaoh realized that God was with Joseph, and he put him in charge of getting everything ready for the famine. Joseph became a very important person in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh called him his second in command.

This whole story has a rather happy ending. After everything his brothers did, Joseph was able to forgive them and even help them survive the famine. God used what Joseph's brothers meant for evil to instead do something that was very good. Here is the thing: this story sounds easy and wonderful, but do you know that Joseph didn't make peace with his family for more than 20 years? And he spent more than two years in prison for a crime he didn't commit. This is a story of hope, but it is also a story of hurt. Joseph was deeply wronged. His family betrayed him, he was used as a slave, and others lied about him and forgot him. He had a rough life story. But God is faithful! He can deliver us no matter how bad our circumstances are.

This is the reality: God did not want Joseph to be sold and enslaved. God desires freedom for people. But He was able to bring Joseph through his painful circumstances and into a place of healing. He was able to restore Joseph's life and relationships. If you're open, God will do the same in your life. God loves you and wants the best for you. God wants you to experience freedom. Genesis 39 tell us, "But while Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him" (verses 20-21). Wherever you are, God is there with you, too.

What's more, God wants to use you to help others find freedom, too.

## Close in Prayer:

“Dear God, Thank you for being with Joseph and for doing great things through him. Thank you for the great plans you have for each of us, too. Help us to trust You and that and to walk in that hope and to do the right thing. Amen.”

## APPLICATION ACTIVITIES

### 1. Bible Story Discussion Questions

- Name a few of the hard situations that Joseph was in. (hated by brothers, sold as a slave, accused of crime he didn't commit, put in jail). How did Joseph do what was right in those situations, even when people were doing wrong towards him?
- How did Joseph handle the uncomfortable situation with Potiphar's wife? (saying no, avoiding, leaving)
- How was Joseph a victim of human trafficking? Who tried to take advantage of him? (Joseph had to work for free and had no rights. He didn't get to go to court to prove he was innocent when Potiphar's wife attacked him. He was not free. He was trafficked for labor, and trafficking victims are held against their will.)
- What plan did God have for Joseph? (healing the brokenness in his family, using him to solve the famine problem in all of Egypt, and showing God's power to the people)

**Explain:** Sometimes we think about slavery as something that happened a long time ago. But just like Joseph, people today are still bought and sold as slaves. Today, we would say that Joseph was a victim of human trafficking.

### 2. Life Map

**Supplies:** Long strips of paper (1 for each student), pencils, ink pad

**Instructions:** Give each student a long strip of paper. Encourage them to think of major events in their life and put them on a timeline—moves, birth of a sibling, starting a new school, date they accepted Christ, parent's divorce, meeting a new friend, loss of a family member, etc. Give them a few minutes to work. Next, have them put thumbprints on the life events where they can see God's protection, presence, and help. Discuss the ways we can see that God was present with us at these different times in our lives, even when we were experiencing difficult situations.

**Explain:** Sometimes we cannot see God working in the middle of our circumstance, but when we trust Him, we can look back and see His fingerprints on our lives.

### 3. Recruiting Techniques

**Instructions:** Discuss how Joseph became a victim, who the different people were who tried to take advantage of him, and ways in which he was exploited.

**Explain:** Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. Today, traffickers get control of their victims in different ways:

- Pretend to be a friend or boyfriend/girlfriend. Trafficker might give expensive gifts or lots of compliments to their victim until the victim trusts them. Once the victim trusts them, traffickers can then take advantage of them.
- Lies. Traffickers might promise the victim something like a good job, money, or a relationship to get the victim to do what they want.
- Violence. Traffickers might kidnap their victims or threaten to hurt them or someone they love .
- Fear. Traffickers might threaten to hurt victims or their family. Or, once the trafficker has gotten the victim to do something the victim thinks is wrong, the trafficker might threaten to tell the secret. The victim feels guilty and is afraid of getting in trouble, so he or she keeps doing what the trafficker wants.

Traffickers prey on people who are vulnerable—individuals who can be easily hurt, either emotional or physically, and are unprotected or are unable to defend themselves.

Discuss what “vulnerable” means. Emphasize that traffickers are looking for victims who are vulnerable—children, teens, and adults they can easily control.

**Explain:** These are some things that can make someone vulnerable:

- Not feeling loved by your family and not understanding how much God loves you and values you (and looking for love in the wrong places)
- Using drugs or alcohol (traffickers use addiction as a way to keep someone enslaved)
- Running away from home (traffickers prey on those in need of a place to stay)
- Developing relationships with people you don't know online

**Explain:** But there are also things you can do to be less vulnerable:

- Remember that God has good plans for your life. You are treasured by God and precious to Him. Your value comes from God, not possessions or peers.
- Develop healthy relationships, both with adults and other kids. You need friends your own age, but you also need trusted adults you can go to when you need help. Each student needs at least one adult they feel safe talking to.
- Practice saying “yes” to things you know are right and “no” to things you know are wrong or that make you uncomfortable. Sometimes it can be hard to say “no.” Practicing saying “no” when you know you are safe can make it easier to say “no” when you are under pressure. Remember, if you are ever in a bad situation, RUN just like Joseph did when Potiphar's wife attacked him. Run to a safe place and call 911 if you are ever in trouble.



## What Can You Do?

- Be smart about what you share online.
- When you see something you don't think is right, tell a trusted adult.
- Be a good friend. When you see someone who is all alone at school, include him or her in your group.
- Talk to others about the problem of trafficking.
- Ask your school to do education about human trafficking and how to stop it.
- Do research about where the items you buy come from. Are they produced by slave labor?

## 4. Wrap It Up

**Explain:** What are some of the things you learned today about human trafficking? (Allow students to respond.) These are hard things to talk about sometimes, and if it makes you feel sad or scared or angry that's okay. But here's what you need to know: trafficking is a big problem, but God is bigger. God has big plans for you. You can be safe, and you can make a difference.

**Close in prayer.**

**Remember to pass out the Family Take-Home.**

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## NOTE TO TEACHER:

### IF A CHILD REPORTS ABUSE:

If a student divulges information that sounds like he or she may be in an abusive situation or has been a victim, here are some basic guidelines. Please see your church leaders for more in-depth guidelines.

1. Do not pry. If a student wants to tell you something then listen, but do not push by asking invasive questions.
2. Run it up the chain of command. As quickly as possible, find your supervisor and explain the situation in a safe setting.
3. With your church leaders, bring up the information in a loving and non-threatening way to the parents. Skip this step if a parent is the alleged abuser.
4. Call Child Protective Services (CPS) and possibly the child's school to get the child help.



# FAMILY TAKE-HOME

**Lesson:** Human Trafficking

**Big Idea:** God can bring good out of bad situations

**Response:** Trust God, even in hard situations

**Bible Story:** Joseph, Genesis 37, 39-44, and 45:1-15

This week we learned about Joseph, who was a victim of human trafficking as a teenager. He was sold into slavery by his own brothers. Joseph's brothers were motivated by anger and envy, but most traffickers today are motivated by greed. Traffickers often prey on children and teens who are looking for love or who don't have much support at home. Parents can fight human trafficking by instilling in children the love and support we feel for them. We are our children's number one fans. We show them they can succeed. One way we show this to our children is by responding to hardships in God's way. Do we give up, cover up, blame, or get bitter, or do we open up to how God wants to use difficulties to grow us?

Find a time this week to talk with your child about something he or she has gone through lately that has been really rough. Talk about Scripture that can help when we're going through tough times. Talk about ways you can give this kind of support to other people you know—especially people who may not have a parent to lean on or don't yet know Jesus.

## Scriptures for Reference:

James 1:2-3

Romans 8:26-28

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Deuteronomy 31:6

Psalms 34:17-18

Psalms 121:1-3

Proverbs 3:5-6

Zephaniah 3:17