

LESSONS IN FORGIVENESS

Subject: Forgiveness
Objective: To show using the story of Joseph and his brothers, the true nature of forgiveness and restoration.
Thesis: Forgiveness and restoration go hand in hand.
Text: Genesis Chapters 37-40

ATTENTION

Forgiveness is the heart of the Gospel. In fact, forgiveness was part of God's design even before he made man.

The forgiveness Adam and Eve received after trampling on God's authority was available even before the fall.

And the Bible, written by men but inspired by God tells us and shows us that the God who created this world is a forgiving God.

1. Psalm 86:15 says that He is **FULL** of compassion
2. Ephesian 2:4 says He is **RICH** in mercy
3. 2 Peter 3:9 says He is **LONG** suffering

David understood and cherished the forgiveness of God.

To get God's forgiveness, he knew that he had to call on the majestic God of the heavens

And when he did he penned these words:

Psalm 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. GO ON!!!

1. And so from a divine perspective forgiveness comes easily.
2. From a divine perspective forgiveness if asked for is granted with immediate effect.
3. From a divine perspective forgiveness is forgetting the unforgettable

This is the Bible's description of one who is forgiven:

Old Testament: Micah 7:19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. KJV

New Testament: 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

NEED

From a divine perspective, God forgets the unforgettable but how can anyone forget the unforgettable from the human standpoint? GO ON!!

If anybody ever had a right to hold a grudge--it was probably Joseph!

THE STORY (Genesis 37-50)

- 1) Most favored of Jacob's 12 sons (special coat).
- 2) Brothers hated him because of his dreams (relate dreams)
- 3) Brothers plot to kill him; sell him into slavery; forget him.

PUNCH: But God was with Joseph!

1. Joseph had an unbroken fellowship with God.
2. His circumstances kept changing but his relationship with God was constant.
3. Joseph trusted God
4. Joseph believed in the promises of God.

And because he did the Bible says:

Genesis 39:2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man...

With God on his side Joseph had fortitude and endurance.

He did not get discouraged and backslide.

He waited for God's time. He committed everything to God.

He endured:

1. Hatred: Genesis 37:4
2. Envy: Genesis 37:11
3. Slavery: Genesis 37:28
4. Temptation: Genesis 39:7-10
5. False Accusation: Genesis 39:14
6. Prison life: Genesis 39:20
7. Ingratitude: Genesis 40:23

But Joseph did not give up hope. He did not go away from God.

PUNCH: His fortitude was a powerful secret of his fruitfulness.

APPLICATION:

- Moving away from God is not the secret to anyone's success
- Moving away from God does not bring happiness
- Moving away from God spells disaster

BIBLE CHARACTERS WHO MOVED AWAY FROM GOD

1. Samson
2. Solomon
3. Jonah

Joseph unlike Samson, Solomon and Jonah did not move away from God

And because he did not move away from God, he was not tied down by a spirit of anger and vengeance.

- His brothers had caused untold suffering in his life.
 - Potiphar's wife had falsely accused him.
 - But in spite of all this suffering he maintained a heart of forgiveness.
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SATISFACTION

After about 25 years of separation from his family, the tension of jealousy and sibling rivalry and personal rejection that began in Genesis 37, the story of Joseph takes a different turn in Genesis 45.

Genesis 45:1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

Joseph is now the 2nd in command in the land of Egypt

Sold into slavery, accused and jailed, he was invested with the insignia of the highest office in the Land of Egypt at the age of 30.

Has he forgotten what his brothers did to him? NO!

But his life is productive.

Genesis 41:51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, *said he*, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

Genesis 41:52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

Joseph is grateful to God, who builds him a home, with all its soothing joys, even in the land of his exile.

But he has not forgotten the dark and bloody treachery of his brothers to his aged parent.

And he bears in mind those early dreams of his childhood.

And if God is with him and the dreams came from God then he must see his siblings again.

And so the Bible says:

Genesis 42:1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?

Genesis 42:2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.

Joseph's brothers come to Egypt under the direction of their aged father

But the ten brothers met with a rough reception from the lord of the land, "The governor"!

Before they speak they must "Bow down to him with their faces to the earth." (Relate Dreams)

The men cannot recognize Joseph.

Twenty years result in a great change in a youth of seventeen.

- His Egyptian attire
- His foreign tongue
- And his exalted position

But how could he fail to remember the ten full-grown men of his early days, with all their peculiarities of feature, attitude, and mother tongue.

And the Bible makes it clear that Joseph the man of God becomes harsh!

Genesis 42:9 Joseph remembered what he had dreamed about them and said, "You're spies! You've come here to find out where our country is weak." CEV

Why didn't he reveal who he was?

Why didn't he receive his brothers with joy? LESSONS IN FORGIVENESS!!!

APPLICATION

1. If we can forget a hurt or pain, it does not call for forgiveness. GO ON!!
2. Forgiveness is not forgetting
3. Forgiveness doesn't mean things go back to the way they were before.
 - a. A forgiven embezzler doesn't become a treasurer again.
 - b. A forgiven child molester—Can't be let loose in a Day Care!

Joseph had forgiven his brothers but he had them make **atonement** for their dark and bloody treachery.

- All ten brothers were jailed for 3 days
- He allowed nine to return but kept one until Benjamin came to Egypt.
- And the journey from Egypt to Hebron was over 200 miles

And even though Joseph was stern and harsh, the God in him broke his heart but he was determined that the atonement before their forgiveness be executed.

Genesis 42:22 Reuben spoke up, "Didn't I tell you not to harm the boy? But you wouldn't listen, and now we have to pay the price for killing him."

Genesis 42:23 They did not know that Joseph could understand them, since he was speaking through an interpreter.

Genesis 42:24 Joseph turned away from them and cried, but soon he turned back and spoke to them again. Then he had Simeon tied up and taken away while they watched.

The story climaxes when Joseph realizes that in order for the remnant in Israel to receive blessing, hope and a future, he would have to reveal his true identity and pursue reconciliation with his brothers.

Amid his emotional state he knows that this is not a time for hate, revenge, bitterness or resentment....it is a time for forgiveness and healing.

He could not refrain himself.

He lifted up his voice in weeping "I am Joseph."

The natural voice, the native tongue, the long-remembered features, would, all at once, strike the apprehension of the brothers.

"You are forgiven"

"I forgive you"

"I love you"

Genesis 45:7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

And at the death of his father Jacob, he told his brothers

Genesis 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

VISUALIZATION

Not every case of forgiveness will turn out as well as Joseph and his brothers.

Some people find it difficult to forgive even themselves

But when God asks us to forgive, he's not asking the impossible.

And because he is not asking us the impossible he asserts:

Matthew 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
Matthew 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Joseph like Jesus shows the importance of forgiveness!

Joseph from a human standpoint forgave but he did not forget

But Jesus from a divine standpoint forgives and forgets.

And because divine forgiveness does not remember, God forgives without reservations.

He did that to the:

1. Woman caught in the act
2. Man lying on his mat for 38 years

And when he forgives, this is what the Bible says:

Micah 7:19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

ILLUSTRATION:

A father was invited to his son's birthday party. The son had just graduated from medical school and had invited mostly his contemporaries and lecturers to the party. When the party was in full sway the father resorted to reading in his son's study. The music wasn't his kind of music since about a year previously he had given his life to the Lord.

As he sat in the study reading, his emotions over took him and he shouted. "Hallelujah!" His son heard and dashed into the study. "Dad what is the matter! We are having a party here, not church." The father responded, "Sorry son. You know I do not like that kind of music and so I thought it best to sit in your study. As I sat here, I saw the Bible that your mother gave to you and I opened it to Micah 7:19. When I read that when God forgives your sins He casts them into the depths of the sea, and knowing my past son, I had no choice but to shout hallelujah."

The son answered, "Well if you cannot control yourself when you read the Bible, give it to me and read this Geography book. The son left his father in the study and the party swung with rhythm. In the middle of the party the father shouted again, "Hallelujah!"

The son rushed into the library stared his dad in the face and said, “Tell me! What do you have to say?” The father said, “Son I am sorry. I was reading the Bible and the Bible says that when God forgives He cast your sins in the depths of the sea. You took the Bible and gave me this geography book but as I was reading the geography book I read the chapter on oceans and I found out that there is a place in the sea that is so deep that no one can get to the bottom and when I realize that no man can dive and retrieve my sins I had no choice but to shout hallelujah.

APPLICATION

When God forgives, he forgets!
 When God forgives, He buries your sins!
 When God forgives, He means that you are forgiven

ACTION

On the cross, He shouted, “Father forgive them...” GO ON!!!

If He can forgive those who nailed Him to the cross, He can forgive you!

If He can forgive the thief that laughed at Him, He can give to you the power to forgive.

And so with God **forgiveness is available** and the **power to forgive** is also available!

THE CALL

1. Is it your **desire** to accept the forgiveness that God offers? (**Hands**)
2. Is it your **desire** to accept the power to forgive that God provides? (**Stand**)
3. The Bible says that God is full of compassion, mercy and forgiveness. Is it your **desire** to respond to God’s compassion, mercy and forgiveness? (**Altar**)

THOUGHT

Don't let the foolish, thoughtless, destructive actions of others catch you in a trap of anger. Take note of the anger, let it go, put your focus on being your best, and you'll surely emerge as a winner.