

CAPITOL STUDIES

MARCH 22, 2023 • WEEK 11



JOSEPH: THE CIVIL SERVANT FROM EGYPT

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Verse of the Week

Genesis 45:7

“God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.”

Forgiveness and Reconciliation



DONT TREAD ON ME

AMERICANS CHERISH THEIR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS to choose what to believe and whom to believe. The American spirit is summed up in the Revolutionary flag with a snake on it, emblazoned with the motto, “Don’t tread on me.” Nobody’s going to push me around! If we’re not careful, as American Christians we tend to bring that same defiant spirit into our relationships with God and others. When God’s Word says something that we don’t like, our attitude is, “I don’t have to obey that!” If a pastor teaches something we don’t like—never mind if it’s in the Bible—we’ll find another church more in line with our tastes. When people, especially God’s people, offend or simply disagree with us, our anger rises, and we want to sever the relationships. It is not an exaggeration to say that relationships are the most important thing in life, because the two greatest commandments in the Bible have to do with right relationships—first toward God and then toward one another (Matt. 22:37-39). Whenever you see broken relationships toward God, in the family, or in the church, you know that it is not pleasing to God. God is in the business of reconciling broken relationships.

Arin Hess

Pastor Arin Hess, *Chaplain, Capitol Studies*



INTRODUCTION

True forgiveness is the answer for many gaping wounds of our society. The anger and resentment confronting us in the media, politics, and social movements often stem from deep-rooted unwillingness to forgive. The Bible's answer to bitterness, resentment, and hostile anger is forgiveness. True forgiveness is necessary for the healing of these emotions. For believers, unity within the body of Christ is often held hostage to the sin of one's unwillingness to forgive. True forgiveness protects the unity we profess to have as members of Christ's body.

True forgiveness never comes cheaply; it costs the one who forgives. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city" (Proverbs 18:19a). To forgive means that you choose to absorb the pain and loss caused by the other person and they go free, even when they don't deserve it. Forgiveness is costly because it demands the most selfless response a person can have toward an offending brother.

When a breach in fellowship occurs, whose fault is the breach? Is it my brother's fault or mine? If it is mine, my responsibility is clear. If it is his fault, then whose responsibility is it to clear up the matter?

The Bible teaches that the demand is actually on both, and the truth of the matter is that the opportunity actually often comes first to the one who has been offended. From the narrative of Joseph, we see not only the responsibility that God places on the offended brother but on the offending brother. We also see an example of true forgiveness.

I. RECONCILIATION THROUGH SUBMISSION TO GOD'S AUTHORITY

Genesis 44:14-17

When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him. ¹⁵Joseph said to them, "What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed practice divination?" ¹⁶So Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found." ¹⁷But he said, "Far be it from me to do this. The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father."

A. God's Authority is a Rightful Authority

Can you imagine where Judah would have gotten if he had swaggered up to Joseph and said, "You can't pull this kind of trick on us! We've got our rights!" And yet that's how some people approach God, challenging His rightful authority over them. God can do whatever He pleases because He alone is God. If He chooses to afflict a righteous man like Job as a demonstration of His glory to Satan, God doesn't have to give an account or explanation to anybody (see Job 38-42). He is the only self-existent Being. All others, including Satan and all the angelic



beings, are created and finite. God alone is uncreated and infinite. He spoke into being all that exists in the universe. All things serve His purposes. He is good and He is in control.

One of the most noticeable characteristics of Joseph throughout these chapters is the centrality of God in his life. This is such an important concept, if only we could grasp it in our daily lives. So often, even for Christians, God is a part of our lives, but He's not at the center. He is a spoke in the wheel of life, but He's not the hub. But for Joseph, everything centered on God.

B. God's Authority is an Awesome Authority

Joseph was equal to Pharaoh. He could have sent his brothers off to work on the pyramids or thrown them in a dungeon. He could have chopped off their heads. He could have refused to sell them grain, and they would have gone home to watch their families slowly starve to death. Joseph had awesome power!

God has even greater authority over His creation, and just as Joseph's brothers sinned against him, so every person has sinned against God. None of us has a leg to stand on if we dare to challenge God's awesome authority to do to us what He righteously could do. That's why Jesus said, "My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" (Luke 12:4-5). Since God's authority is a rightful and awesome authority, **our submission must be a complete submission.**

Too often, we're like the little boy whose mother disciplined him by making him sit in a chair, and he said, "I'm sitting on the outside, but I'm standing on the inside." His submission wasn't complete because he had a defiant attitude. But it's not enough to submit on the outside while you're seething with resistance on the inside.

The key to reconciliation is your attitude, and the key to your attitude is submitting yourself to the sovereign God.

God's purpose in all things which seem to be against me is to bring ultimate glory to Himself and good to you as I trust Him. When my attitude is right and God is the center of my life, it will often motivate the one who wronged me to deal with his or her sin before God. So, what should my attitude be?

II. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OFFENDED BROTHER

Genesis 45:1-4

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, "Have everyone go out from me." So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ²He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it. ³Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they





were dismayed at his presence. ⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come closer to me.” And they came closer. And he said, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

A. The Offended Brother Should Manifest Grief Over the Break in the Relationship

Joseph addresses his brothers in private. He does not add to their own distress. Though his brothers have sinned against him more than once, Joseph does not succumb to bitterness or anger toward them. He chooses to keep his thoughts above the harshness of the wrongs against himself and displays genuine grief over the broken relationship with his brothers. Their offence against him has created a rupture in the family, the chosen family of God on the earth. The natural response when one has been offended is anger, hostility, defensiveness, etc. Meditating on the larger picture will not only help restrain us from reacting impulsively, but it will help us grieve for the proper reason—that sin has had a damaging effect on God’s people and the work of God.

Genesis 45:5-8

Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. ⁸Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

B. The Offended Brother Should Be Willing to Forget Personal Injury

Joseph does everything he can to communicate “it was not your fault” to his brothers. Though they have truly injured him, he has purposefully sought not to dwell on the hardship that the contention caused him. To cling to personal injury demonstrates, on our part, a misunderstanding of God’s will. Joseph discourages further self-condemnation and quickly puts the situation into proper perspective: “it was not you who sent me here, but God.” As an offended brother, I must ask God to help me see His hand even in the offence.

Genesis 45:9-15

Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, “Thus says your son Joseph, ‘God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. ¹¹There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, and you and your household and all that you have would be impoverished.’ ¹²Behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth which is speaking to you. ¹³Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry



and bring my father down here.”¹⁴ Then he fell on his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck.¹⁵ He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him.

C. The Offended Brother Should Pursue Restoration— Whenever Possible

Joseph has been pursuing reconciliation since he first renewed contact with his brothers. In the New Testament, Jesus encourages such attempts at reconciliation (Matthew 18:15ff; Luke 17:3). The repentance of his brothers is now evident, and Joseph not only restores their former favor with him, he goes well beyond in his kindness. He puts their past behind and looks to a bright future. Before their relationship had been filled with much friction and strife; now they can embrace one another and talk peaceably. Our forgiveness needs to be spoken and demonstrated, but it may also need continual demonstrations until the forgiven one is assured of being completely forgiven. In later chapters we will see how Joseph continues to show proof of his forgiveness.

III. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OFFENDING BROTHER

The offended brother can have a forgiving heart, but for true forgiveness to take place, the offending brother has to also meet his responsibility. In Luke 17:3, when Jesus defines the responsibility of the one who has been offended, He intimates that the offending brother might not repent. “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him [bring wrong home to his conscience]; and if [conditional clause—he may not] he repents, forgive him.” Joseph forgave his brothers in his heart long before he expressed it to them. He waited to see their repentance before extending forgiveness, but he didn’t wait to deal with his bitterness and to forgive them in his heart. That’s an important distinction! God has made provision for the forgiveness of sinners before they repent. But He doesn’t extend forgiveness to them, and there can be no reconciliation between God and the sinner, until the sinner repents. Since we are to forgive as God has forgiven us, it seems that we, also, should maintain that distinction. However, we must remember that it is the “kindness of God” that leads *us* to repentance (Rom. 2:4). We must go to God and take care of any anger or bitterness **before** dealing with the offense. Our kindness in word and action can be used of God to lead the offending person to repentance.

But what if the person doesn’t repent? What do you do while you wait for repentance? ***Look for opportunities to return good for evil. Pray earnestly that God will bring him or her into a right relationship with Himself.*** In Romans 12:19, Paul urges believers, “never take your own revenge.” Revenge is a combination of two Greek words—one meaning “out of” and the other meaning “just.” Literally rendered, revenging is my trying to extract for myself what is my due or just right. God demands that we forgo this attitude and instead leave the matter for Him to settle.



Theme Verse

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren,
whatever is **true**,
whatever is **honorable**,
whatever is **right**,
whatever is **pure**,
whatever is **lovely**,
whatever is of
good repute,
if there is any
excellence
and if anything is
worthy of praise,
dwell on these things.



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CONCLUSION

One of the capitol angels is named *Magnanimity*. The word means generosity or forgiveness. Looking at the forgiveness (magnanimity) manifested by Joseph should cause us to once again marvel at the forgiveness that Jesus has given and has in store for each of us. His kindness brings us to repentance. He restores our broken relationship, forgiving us and putting our past away. He gives us hope for a bright future.

Pastor Arin Hess

Questions to Consider:

- How can we forgive when we don't feel forgiving? How can forgiveness move from the mental to the emotional level?
- While we should be quick to forgive in our hearts, the act of extending that forgiveness verbally should be delayed until there is evidence of repentance. Agree/Disagree?
- Is it hypocritical to do something kind for someone who wronged you if you don't feel loving toward them?
- Does God's ultimate sovereignty make him responsible for sin? Does it mean that sinners can excuse their wrongdoing?

FOOTNOTES

All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*.

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Meeting during the
108th Legislature's
First Session

SENATORS

7:00–8:00 A.M. Wednesdays
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