

“Living Large: Lessons From Old Testament Heroes”

Week 4: Joseph, Forgive and Remember
Genesis 50: 15-21

THE BIG IDEA: Forgiveness and reconciliation depend on remembering God’s providence and goodness in our lives.

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED: Share some stories of public figures asking for forgiveness or scenes from movies or TV on reconciliation.

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD’S WORD:

(For more ideas—and to give me some feedback—see my October 1st blog posting on Joseph, <http://cootsona.blogspot.com>.)

This passage ends the intricate story of Joseph, which starts in Genesis 37. The key verses Joseph’s response to his brothers: “Don’t be afraid, for I am under God. You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:19-20). Joseph ties forgiveness and reconciliation with God’s providence—in other words, he doesn’t exact retribution on his brothers because of God’s working for good in all their lives.

Together, read Genesis 50, especially verses 15-21.

1. Discuss *forgiveness* and *reconciliation*. How are they related? How are they different? When have you experienced forgiveness or reconciliation?
2. Read Genesis 37. How do you think it affected Joseph’s brothers that Jacob named him his favorite? How do you think Joseph’s dream affected his brothers?
3. What contributes to sibling rivalry and generally to tension within families? Can you see this at work in Joseph’s family? Have you seen it at work in your family? Where?
4. I’ve used John Calvin’s translation of verse 19: “Fear not, for I am under God.” How does our faith and submitting to God’s will lead us to forgive others?
5. Joseph clearly says that what the brothers did was “intended to harm me.” He does not try to call evil actions good. How does that honesty change the way we approach forgiveness?

6. Joseph's forgiveness is based on the conviction that God is working for good. (See Romans 8:28.) How did grasping God's providence help Joseph forgive? How does that help us forgive?
7. If God wants us to forgive and his providence leads us to forgiveness, why is it so tough to do?

LIVING OUT "REAL LIFE"

8. The story of Joseph touches on family dysfunction. Is there someone in your family that you need to contact and say, "Let's work toward reconciliation"?
9. Is there someone you have to forgive or to be reconciled to? (This is God's heart for you.) Who is that person? How can your RLG or small group help this happen?

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

Take some time to share prayer requests, where you need to find God's grace and peace. Be sure to give thanks for each other and pray for one another's needs. When we pray together, we find the power of God.

One Final Insight on Forgiveness from Henri Nouwen

Forgiveness means that I continually am willing to forgive the other person for not being God—for not fulfilling all my needs.