



June 2-3, 2012
Genesis 42-45
"Forgive and Be Forgiven"
Pastor Gary Hamrick

To better understand the context of this study, consider the following questions: (1) If someone had severely wronged you, never apologized, walked out of your life and then, suddenly, unannounced, showed up at your front door 20 years later, what would your reaction be and how would you handle the situation? (2) What if you had wronged someone, never apologized, forgot about the person, but then you had a "chance" encounter with them 20 years after the fact, what would you do? How would you make amends? What would you say? This account fits these hypothetical situations perfectly. Joseph and his brothers had been estranged for more than 20 years, but God providentially arranged a reunion that surprised everyone involved!

Joseph was now about 39 years old, and he hadn't seen his brothers since he was about 17 years old. Even though Joseph ended up in Egypt, God never forgot him, and this is easy to see when you consider how much favor God had shown him over the years. Yes, it's true that he went through some very difficult times, including spending 12 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit, but God eventually orchestrated events so Joseph would be promoted to the most powerful position in Egypt, next to Pharaoh himself. And it was in the position of Grand Vizier that God used Joseph to save the family he hadn't seen in 22 years!

There was a famine that covered the known world, but because God had given a dream to Pharaoh and its interpretation to Joseph, Egypt was prepared. Joseph stockpiled grain for seven years in preparation for seven years of famine. The events that would lead to a family reunion started to develop when Joseph's family was starving in Israel. Jacob heard there was food in Egypt, so he sent his sons to bring back the necessary amount of food to meet their needs.

When Joseph's brothers were introduced to Joseph they didn't recognize him, because he looked completely different from the teenage boy they last saw when the caravan carried him away. He had been in Egypt about 22 years, so he looked ¹ and talked like an Egyptian. ²

These events bring us to the powerful story of Joseph's godly response toward his brothers. In this study we'll look at several remarkable ways that Joseph dealt with the wrongs committed against him. It's interesting to note that he had a right perspective about people, and God. First, Joseph ministered to those who wronged him. Second, he was able to see God's providence even in the midst of his adversities. And finally, Joseph went well beyond just forgiving them; he actually looked for ways to minister to them!

Joseph Ministers To Those Who Wronged Him

1. **Genesis 42:5** - *"And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you."*
2. **Genesis 45:10-11** tells us Joseph provided a place for his family to live in Goshen. ³
3. In the New Testament, Paul wrote in **Romans 12:17-21** about how Christians need to respond to situations like those Joseph experienced. ⁴
4. The Bible teaches that the way to bring someone to the realization of their wrongdoing is not to treat them with contempt, because that type of response only stirs things up; it's to "kill them with kindness," as the saying goes.

¹ Not only would Joseph have been dressed in white with a gold collar. He would've had a shaved head and worn a headdress. His face would have looked quite a bit different, considering the fact that he would have worn very thick eyeliner, which was common for Egyptian men at that time.

² **Genesis 43:23**

³ *"You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute."*

⁴ *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* NOTE: The part about "heaping burning coals on [someone's] head" has nothing to do with getting God to pour out his wrath on the person or persons. The meaning is that doing good so your character will have a burning conviction on the one(s) who have wronged you.

5. There is nothing quite as convicting for someone who has wronged you than when you minister to his or her needs, but at the same time, there is nothing quite as difficult as ministering with the proper attitude!
6. In [Luke 6:27-36](#), Jesus said: *“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ lend to ‘sinners,’ expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*
 - a. In this Scripture, Jesus was saying that the kind of response he was looking for would be contrary to the world’s approach to dealing with people who offend us, but it should go without saying that living for the Lord means living a contrary life.
 - b. It’s often going to be the case that Christians will do things that are the exact opposite of the ways of the world.
 - c. It’s often going to be the case that Christians will have to stand alone, as they experience ridicule, being unpopular, and uncomfortable, however, the Christ-like life will always be blessed by God in the long run!

Joseph Sees God’s Providence Even In His Adversities

7. Three times in [Genesis 45](#), Joseph says, “God sent me here!”⁵
8. When the brothers first realize that they were appearing before their brother, Joseph, *“they were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.”*⁶
 - a. Imagine the guilt they’ve been living with for more than 20 years, and how they’ve been tormented by their sin and the lies they’ve told to cover up their sinful acts.

⁵ [Genesis 45:5, 7-8](#)

⁶ [Genesis 45:3](#)

- b. Think of what it would be like to think back on how they stood idly by and watched their father mourn over the son he thought was dead.
 - c. And even after Joseph comforted them,⁷ when their father, Jacob, died,⁸ their feelings of guilt were still so strong that they were convinced Joseph was going to snap, so they were moved to finally, after 22 years, say they were sorry!
9. The strongest statement in the Bible that ministers to offenders and declares the providence of God in adversity is found in [Genesis 50:19-21](#), when Joseph said: " *'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.'* And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them."

Joseph's Brothers Ask For Forgiveness

10. It took a long time for Joseph's brothers to ask forgiveness, because they had lost track of him.
11. They didn't even apologize in person; they sent word to Joseph through a messenger.⁹
12. This might seem a little impersonal not being face to face, but suffice it to say that a written apology will be welcomed.
13. When Joseph received their message, he wept!
 - a. Considering all of the years Joseph lived with feelings of rejection and betrayal, as well as the sadness over missing his family, it's no wonder that he wept when he heard the words, "Please forgive us."
 - b. These words allowed the years of pent-up emotion to come pouring out in a flood of tears.
14. God calls us to be reconciled to each other, so there should be no outstanding debt, except the debt of love.
15. [Romans 12:18](#) - *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."*

⁷ [Genesis 45](#)

⁸ [Genesis 50:1-18](#)

⁹ [Genesis 50:17](#)

16. [Colossians 3:13](#) - *“Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Genesis 42:1-8](#), [45:1-15](#), and [50:1-21](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. When you look back over your life, can you see the difficult things you’ve experienced and see God’s purpose and sovereignty, even in the adversities?
4. Spend time talking about God’s providential hand at work in the lives of the people in your group.
 - a. Read and discuss [Genesis 42:5](#).
5. How has the Lord used you to minister to people who have wronged you?
 - a. What was their reaction to your Christ-like response?
 - b. Read and discuss [Romans 12:14, 17-21](#) and [Colossians 3:13](#).
6. Read and discuss [Luke 6:27-36](#).
 - a. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they’ve had when they took a stand for the Lord that put them in an uncomfortable and unpopular position.
 - b. How did the Lord work in the situation(s), including behind the scenes?
7. How are you dealing with the consequences of your sin against others?
 - a. Have you experienced times of guilt and remorse months or even years later?
 - b. How has the Lord ministered his forgiveness to you?
 - c. Who do you need to speak to and say, “I’m sorry”?
 - d. Is there someone from whom you’re longing to hear the words, “I’m sorry”?
8. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: follow the leading of the Spirit concerning seeking God’s forgiveness for sin(s) committed against others; seek out the person or persons they’ve sinned against for the purpose of offering their humble apology and, hopefully, receiving forgiveness; share the same perspective as Joseph regarding people,

and God, when it comes to ministering to those who have wronged them, and seeing God's hand at work in their lives, even in times of adversity.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).