

Day Four

What do you do when, in extending forgiveness, the person who has hurt you seems oblivious to the wrong he or she has done?

Looking back over Genesis 42:1-34, how would you characterize Joseph's actions toward his brothers?

Does he respond in the way you might have had you been in his situation? Why or why not?

Jesus had a number of things to say about how we are to respond to those who don't treat us well. Take a look at Luke 6:27-35.

What is the "bottom line" idea in what Jesus is saying here? What's His main point?

In what way(s) do you see Joseph responding to his brothers in a way similar to what Jesus calls us to?

What do you find hardest about Jesus' instructions? Why?

Are there people in your life that you are treating inconsistent with Jesus' call to you? What will it take for you to respond in graciousness to those who have wronged you--much like Joseph responded to his brothers?

Day Five

Perhaps you have heard of Corrie ten Boom. Her story was told in the book *The Hiding Place*. She often spoke of the atrocities she and her sister experienced in a Nazi concentration camp . . . a camp where her sister died. And there she learned about forgiveness.

It was many years later that she learned another lesson on forgiveness. Apparently some Christians had wronged her. She had forgiven them. But when asked if they who had wronged her had accepted her forgiveness, she told an acquaintance: "They deny anything ever happened. But I have saved all their letters and I can show you where . . ." Although she said she forgave, she had held on to the "evidence."

Do you think Joseph might have been tempted to do the same?

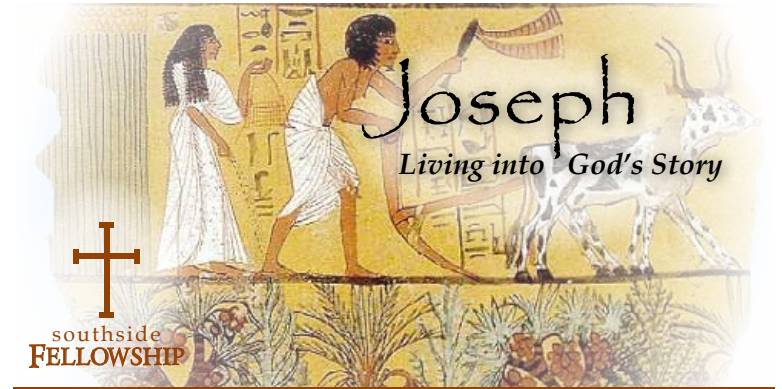
When confronted by a friend with the incongruity of preserving letters that "proved" the wrongs that were done to her by some Christians, Corrie ten Boom had a change of heart. She wrote:

For an astonishing moment I could not find my voice. "Lord Jesus," I whispered at last, "who takes all my sins away, forgive me for preserving all these years the evidence against others! Give me grace to burn all these letters as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to your glory."

I did not go to sleep that night until I had gone through my desk and pulled out those letters and fed them all into my little coal-burning grate. As the flames leaped and glowed, so did my heart.

Tramp for the Lord, Corrie ten Boom

Learn from Joseph . . . and from Corrie. Take the Master's words to heart. If you are harboring any hardness toward another, respond to what the Lord is telling you now. Forgive those who have wronged you . . . and in that forgiveness do good to those, yes, even those who did you wrong. It is possible. Jesus invites you to do so. Joseph modelled it. Corrie did it, too. And now, it's your turn.



Weekly Devotional Guide

March 14, 2010

Genesis 42: A Change of Heart

Day One

Joseph has risen to power. He no longer is living in the "forgotten" column of life. Things are, seemingly, beginning to "go well" for him. As we have been following the story of Joseph (either assuming or pretending that you don't know how the story ends up in Genesis), what do you think would be a good turn of events now that Joseph has stepped into power?

It is important to keep in mind that Joseph was a man like us and what happened in his life was tragic and sorrowful, initially. Keep that real picture of a real man in view as you read Genesis 42:1-38.

Up to this point in the story, what do you know about Joseph's brothers? What kind of men have they shown themselves to be?

In a broad, general way, how does the picture of the brothers pictured here in Genesis 42 contrast with how we have seen the brothers up until this point? Are there differences? If so, what seems to be different about them?

Look specifically at what the brothers say about themselves. What do the following passages tell you about how they are thinking?

42:10-11:

42:21:

42:28:

What is going on in the brothers' hearts? How are they "interpreting" what is happening?

Do you think that they are making sense of what is happening in an appropriate way? Why or why not?

Day Two

As we read the narrative recorded for us in Genesis, it is helpful to keep in mind that Genesis records for us *what did happen* and not, necessarily, *what must happen* or *what always happens*. So, as we watch how God deals with Joseph's brothers, we cannot conclude that He will always deal with others in identical fashion, but we can still learn something about the kinds of things God might do. Keep that in mind as you read Genesis 42:6-28.

What did God use to bring Joseph and his brothers back together?

How do you make sense of the thought that God was using a widespread famine to orchestrate a family reunion?

Once the brothers get to Egypt, what happens that apparently leads to their consciences being stirred? List the progression of events that stirs their thinking.

Seeing as the seven years of plenty have not passed and the land is somewhere in the grips of the seven years of famine, when Joseph and his brothers meet it has been over twenty years since the brothers had sold Joseph into slavery. What does the exchange the brothers have in Genesis 42:21-22 tell you about what is stirring in their hearts, even twenty years after the fact?

Why do you think God is orchestrating all of this in the lives of the brothers?

What do you think life could have been like for the brothers, day in and day out, watching their grieving father and seeing the vacant place at the dinner table?

Do you think God is being cruel in bringing all this to the surface in the brothers' lives? Why or why not?

What is the healthiest thing for the brothers to do--and the healthiest thing for us to do--when God starts bringing long-overlooked sin to the surface?

Day Three

As we watch the story of Joseph unfold, we must keep in

mind what we are told about what Joseph is thinking.

What is going on in Joseph's thinking when he names his two sons (Genesis 41:51-52)?

What is happening in and to Joseph as he encounters his brothers for the first time in 20 years (as recorded in Genesis 42:6-9)?

What does it mean that "Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them"?

With this awareness of what is going on in Joseph's mind and heart, read Genesis 42:9-28.

At first read, we might conclude that Joseph is, in some way, being vindictive. But what insight does 42:24 provide about Joseph's heart?

What about his actions as recorded in 42:25? What insight do they offer into what is going on in Joseph's mind and heart?

All of Joseph's actions are predicated on Joseph remembering his decades-old dream. If Joseph is *not* trying to get back at his brothers, what *might* his "testing" them be all about?