

The Belonging: A Study in Genesis 37-50
Lesson 6 – Joseph and His Brothers – Part Two
Genesis 44-45

When problems arise in relationships, keep the relationship bigger than the problem.

Lie: Life is a battle between good people and evil people.

Truth:

We are all prone to dichotomous thinking and tribalism. The line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. Take a generous view of people and look for nuance (rather than assuming the worst about people within a simplistic us-versus-them mentality) (*The Coddling of the American Mind*, p. 263).

We need to be careful not to fall into the trap of us-versus-them thinking. Our culture says, agree with me completely or I will cancel you – “Cancel culture.” If you do not affirm my choices, you are harming me.

On reading books by people you don't fully agree with:

What has happened to the ability to read and evaluate? Take what is good and leave the rest. The Bible is our plumb line. If we use it as our guide, we will not be led astray. The problem for many believers is that they don't personally study the Bible, instead they allow someone else to study it and tell them what it says. Consequently, we can be easily manipulated by emotionally charged accusations and characterizations of people as well as ideas.

It is not an all or nothing, us-versus-them world. When we fall into that trap, it eventually leads to what we see happen with Joseph's brothers. It was them against Joseph...so he must be eliminated. Joseph became the threat.

It is in essence what we are seeing happen in Israel. Us-versus-them mentality leads to fear of the other, hatred and eventual desire to eliminate – leading to horrors and atrocities that are difficult to comprehend.

We do not live in an us-versus-them world with people. We live in an us-versus-them world with demons.

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm” (Ephesians 6:12-13).

Joseph stood firm by trusting God and His sovereignty. He did not give in to emotional reasoning. He did not fall into the trap of us-vs-them thinking. Instead, he surrendered to the Lord and allowed Him to grant wisdom and insight. Because he believed, he saw.

Remember the twelve spies that came back to the Israelites with a report about the Promised Land? Ten of them entered in unbelief and their vision was limited to the natural. Caleb and Joshua believed God and had a totally different perspective.

If we believe, we will see. If we allow fear and unbelief to crowd out faith, we will be left to reasoning in the natural, and thinking it all depends on us to make life work.

If we believe God, that He is working all things together for our good, then we will trust Him even when we do not understand.

I. The Final Test (Genesis 44)

A. Planting the Cup (vv. 1-13)

“He searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack” (Genesis 44:12).

B. The Brothers Bow (vv. 14-17)

C. Judah Steps Up (vv. 18-34)

II. The Big Reveal (Genesis 45)

A. Joseph Reveals His Identity (vv. 1-15)

“The moment finally came when Joseph revealed himself. It was the moment he dreamed of. But instead of punishing them, which he had the power to do, he wept. Filled with love, he demonstrated total forgiveness” (R.T. Kendall, *Total Forgiveness*, p. 45).

1. Forgive from the heart.

“For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Matthew 12:34).

2. Don’t talk about the offense.

(Speak to a counselor or a mature believer.)

3. Refuse to punish.

4. Bless and pray for those you have forgiven.

Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For 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. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, 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 (Genesis 45:5-8).

“Although we often do not see it at first, all of our bitterness is ultimately traceable to a resentment of God” (R. T. Kendall, *Total Forgiveness*, p. 33).

B. Pharaoh's Offer (vv. 16-20)

C. The Brother's Response (vv. 21-28)

We are called to higher living (*The Belonging*, p. 187).

How to keep the relationship bigger than the problem:

I then shall live as one who's been forgiven.
I'll walk with joy to know my debts are paid.
I know my name is clear before my Father;
I am His child and I am not afraid.
So, greatly pardoned, I'll forgive my brother;
The law of love I gladly will obey.

I then shall live as one who's learned compassion.
I've been so loved, that I'll risk loving too.
I know how fear builds walls instead of bridges;
I'll dare to see another's point of view.
And when relationships demand commitment,
Then I'll be there to care and follow through.

Your Kingdom come around and through and in me;
Your power and glory, let them shine through me.
Your Hallowed Name, O may I bear with honor,
And may Your living Kingdom come in me.
The Bread of Life, O may I share with honor,
And may You feed a hungry world through me.
Amen, Amen, Amen
(Gloria Gaither, 1981).