



Essentials of Forgiveness

Genesis 50:15-26

Learning Graciousness from Joseph

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Starting point

Most of you have probably heard that true forgiveness is just like forgetting the incident ever happened at all. Is that true? Some people believe it is impossible. From Joseph's life we see 4 great strides he takes in showing us what true forgiveness is.



A. Freely Forgiving: (15-17)

You could have taken revenge.

"15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!' 16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, 'Your father charged before he died, saying, 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, 'Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. "And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?" (Gen 50:15-19a).

First big step is to realize God is the avenger (Rom 12:19; I Th 5:15; I Pe 4:19).

- Freely forgiving is forgiving people even if they do not ask.

Application

- Have you been deeply scarred by someone's actions? Who? When?
- Have you ever forgiven someone before they asked? When? How do you know?

B. Fully Forgiving: (18-20)

You could have taken advantage of those who hurt you.

"And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive" (Gen 50:20).

Second big step is to see God's providence including even with man's malice (Rom 8:28).

Have you forgiven all the way? You could gain an advantage over them if you wanted, maybe financially, power, in position, or esteem. Instead you chose to humble yourself in God's grand plan.

- Jesus' suffering serves as an example
- Joseph placed himself under God's leadership.
- Joseph could see that all the evil and good were under God's sovereign control.
- God meant it for good.

Application

- Can you accept how God works through your life, even though it might include evil?
- If you gained an advantage over those who wrongly treated you, would you humbly forgive them or take revenge?

C. Friendly Forgiving: (21)

You could have ignored them.

"So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them" (Gen 50:21).

Third big step is to show kindness to your enemies.

(Luke 6:27 "Do good to your enemies.")

- Friendly forgiving enables us to focus on the kindness that we need to exercise. Instead of focusing on the wrong, we compassionately think about their needs and in some little way attempt to fulfill it.

Application

- How have you practically loved someone who has hurt or offended you?
- Make a plan and pick a time to love them.

D. Forgetful Forgiving:(22-26)

You could have nurtured your pain so that you couldn't trust them at all.

"22 Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. 23 And Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees. 24 And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." 25 Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here." 26 So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt" (Gen 50:22-26).

Fourth big step is to entrust your hopes on those who purposely hurt you.(Heb 11:22).

"By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones" (Heb 11:22).

Application

- Have you ever forgiven someone to the point that you entrusted yourself into their hands?

Summary Application

A. Freely Forgiving (Gen 50:15-17)

You let God take revenge. Meanwhile you busily forgive as Jesus has taught.

B. Fully Forgiving (Gen 50:18-20)

You could have taken advantage of those who hurt you but you know God has other plans and wisely incorporated all the evil that you have seen in a more beautiful plan.

C. Friendly Forgiving (Gen 50:21)

You could have ignored those who have hurt you but instead you take action and practically love them.

D. Forgetful Forgiving (Gen 50:22-26)

You could have nurtured your pain so that you couldn't trust them at all, but instead you asked them a favor. The bitterness has been fully replaced by love and trust.