



grow. pray. study.

May 11, 2025

Forgiveness and Families

Scripture: Genesis 50:15-21(CEB)

Dreams of Grandeur, Seeds of Trouble

MONDAY 5.12.25 Genesis 37:2-11

Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife (cf. [Genesis 29:16-30](#)). That was one reason he favored Rachel's first son Joseph. The Hebrew text may have been about the famous coat's length. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) used a word that meant "many-colored." Family therapists know that a "chosen child" like Joseph often has emotional and relationship problems. Joseph's strutting misuse of his ability to receive and interpret dreams eventually upset even Jacob.

- Jacob might have seen the danger of parental favoritism from his own parents (cf. [Genesis 25:28](#)), but he didn't. Based on your growing-up years, is it easier for you to identify with young Joseph, enjoying being "dad's favorite," or with his brothers, feeling left out of "dad's" esteem? How have you found that God, the source of what the Bible called "steadfast love," can be a "fixed point" helping you grow beyond the wounds family dynamics can leave on any of us?
- Joseph and his brothers were not an isolated event. Scholar Peter Enns referred to "the Genesis theme of sibling rivalry," and noted, "Israel's national history will be one big sibling rivalry event. The twelve brothers will in time become the twelve tribes of Israel, and they will—wait for it—not get along. At all.... Sibling rivalry is civil war in miniature." * Family tensions cause much pain and are often the hardest to forgive. Are there family struggles in the past that you find hard to forgive?

Prayer: Lord God, whether as a parent, a sibling, a grandparent or in any other capacity, help me to honor and value each one of your children I have a chance to influence. Help me find healing in you for any wounds I carry from earlier life experiences. Amen.

* Enns, Peter; Byas, Jared. *Genesis for Normal People* (Second Edition w/ Study Guide) (pp. 100-101). The Bible for Normal People. Kindle Edition.

Sold (but not killed): Family Becomes Enemy

TUESDAY 5.13.25 Genesis 37:12-28

Jacob cluelessly sent Joseph to visit his brothers, far from home. They were angry—their brother lorded it over them, their father undervalued them. Reflecting the primitive, violent ethics they saw in cultures around them, they wanted to kill Joseph. Older brothers Reuben and Judah talked them out of killing Joseph. Instead (only slightly better), they sold Joseph to traders going to Egypt. As the traders took Joseph away, the brothers clearly felt they would never see him again.

- The family tension theme went on. Genesis' first readers would have seen it more easily than we do. "The text refers to both Ishmaelites and Midianites, kinfolk both descended from Abraham.... The forebears of these two peoples were half-brothers to one another (and to Isaac), and uncles to Jacob; thus, these traders are second or third cousins to Joseph and his brothers." * Family betrayed Joseph. Who has betrayed you? Has surviving that pain made you stronger? If so, how?
- To Joseph's brothers, slavery in Egypt was virtually a death sentence. But at least they didn't do something irreversible—without realizing it, they left room for God to work. The apostle Paul wrote, "Don't try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. It is written, 'Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back, says the Lord'" (Romans 12:19). How can you (ideally more purposely than Joseph's brothers) live out that wise counsel?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, people betrayed you, but you did not allow that to knock you off course. Help me find in your love the source of strength to move beyond any pain I experience from others. Amen.

* Zondervan, NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 536). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Integrity Unshaken because God was with Him

WEDNESDAY 5.14.25 Genesis 39:1-4, 6-12, 16-21

A spoiled, privileged son was now a slave in Egypt. Remarkably, instead of sulking and being bitter, Joseph's gifted integrity led Potiphar, his Egyptian master, to make him "head of his household." The Genesis historian said, "The Lord was with Joseph." Sadly, Joseph also impressed Potiphar's wife. He refused to betray his master's trust and rebuffed her advances. Potiphar took his wife's word and sent Joseph to prison. God helped Joseph also greatly impress the jail's commander.

- "Joseph is the guy who keeps bouncing back, not because he has an inherent resilience but because God is with him and shows commitment to him." * Do you think God's presence relieved Joseph of the need for energy, or did Joseph need to work hard and wisely to make his Egyptian master's household run smoothly? Does God's blessing relieve you of the need for effort and wisdom, or does God tend to work through those qualities in your life?
- Joseph knew Potiphar trusted him. He might well have gotten some sensual pleasure and kept the "head of the household" job. But honoring Potiphar's trust cost him, at least outwardly. Have you ever chosen not to do something wrong, even if you could "get away with it"? Looking back, are you glad you kept your integrity or not? For what reasons? Genesis said, "The Lord was with Joseph and remained loyal to him." Can you trust God to remain loyal to you?

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for your steadfast love. Thank you that when I am faithful, and even when I wander away, you are always loyal to me and waiting to direct my life on your path. Amen.

* John Goldingay, *Genesis for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 17–50*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010, p. 140.

Prisoner to Prime Minister by God's Grace

THURSDAY 5.15.25 Genesis 41:16-26, 29-30, 33-34, 37-40, 45, 50

Quick summary: The Egyptian Pharaoh jailed two men he'd trusted. Each man had a mysterious dream, and God helped Joseph explain those dreams. When Pharaoh had mysterious dreams, one of the men told him about Joseph. * Through Joseph, God warned Pharaoh that his two bizarre dreams (corn eating corn?) were a warning of a coming famine. Joseph so amazed Pharaoh that the king made a shocking announcement. He was freeing the Hebrew and naming him his chief deputy!

- Egypt's ruler said to Joseph, "I heard that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it." Joseph's answer was prompt and clear: "It's not me. **God** will give Pharaoh a favorable response" (verse 16). Joseph could have easily taken the credit, but his day-by-day choices before this moment had made honesty a habit he didn't have to think hard about. What choices are you making each day to build the character God wants you to have?
- Tucked into the story is a seemingly minor detail. Joseph's promotion gave him an Egyptian wife. "The author of Genesis has no problem with Joseph's wife being the daughter of a priest at the great city of Heliopolis, Sun City, where the sun god was the focus of worship." ** She gave birth to two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. The mother of two of Israel's twelve tribes was an Egyptian! How did this detail begin to show God's love for all people, not just those of one ethnicity or nation?

Prayer: Lord, your guiding hand is at work in my life each day. Help me not to overlook or fail to value that just because you do not always produce reversals in my fortunes as dramatic as you did for Joseph. Amen.

* If you have time, read the whole fascinating story in [Genesis 40:1-41:15](#).

** John Goldingay, *Genesis for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 17-50*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010, p. 147.

Forgiveness Triumphs, Family Restored

FRIDAY 5.16.25 Genesis 45:1-15

More quick summary: Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food during the famine. They didn't recognize Joseph (of course). He tested them, making Simeon a hostage, planting money in their bags, insisting they bring Benjamin, and putting his silver cup in Benjamin's sack to see if they would abandon their youngest brother as they had abandoned him. * When this "Egyptian" officer said he was their brother Joseph, "his brothers couldn't respond because they were terrified before him." But Joseph didn't seek revenge. He aimed to reunite his family with grace and generosity.

- We know Israel's understanding of God changed over time. It's quite possible that Joseph and the writer(s) of Genesis believed that since God causes everything, God made Joseph's brothers sell him to the traders. At Resurrection we **don't** believe God causes bad things to happen. (Why not? Passages like [John 9:2-3](#), [James 1:13](#)). In what ways did Joseph's story bear witness to God's ability to use even bad actions (which God did **not** cause) to achieve good ends?
- Reuniting with his brothers was not just a happy family picnic. We read that Joseph wept. Pastor Hamilton wrote of life's big hurts, "This kind of wound does not disappear after a day. I picture the boulder being chipped away, a little at a time." ** What role does openly expressing sorrow play in the process of forgiving, or receiving forgiveness from a person you've hurt? How can repressing sorrow or regret block reconciliation?

Prayer: Merciful, forgiving God, how powerfully Joseph exemplified your kingdom's spirit in the way he treated his brothers. Keep growing in me a capacity to embody and act out your mercy. Amen.

* If you have time, read the very moving story in [Genesis 42-44](#).

** Hamilton, Adam, *Forgiveness: Finding Peace Through Letting Go* (p. 95). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition. See also pp. 115-119 to explore how therapy, naming the hurt, journaling, prayer and using our painful experiences to help others can be part of the process that chips away the boulder of hurt.

Joseph's Story: God's Saving Mission Kept Alive

SATURDAY 5.17.25 Genesis 50:12-21

At the end of Genesis, the patriarch Jacob died. With him gone, Joseph's brothers were again (or still) afraid. It often takes time to work through feelings before we forgive deep hurts, and we see in the brothers that it takes time to trust forgiveness for those deep hurts. Their fearful, transparent effort to put words in their dead father's mouth moved Joseph to tears. "Some have defined forgiveness as 'giving up the hope of a different past.' I would add that it's taking on the hope of a joyful future. Forgiveness is believing that the future can be better than the past. The past can't be changed, but God can do something redemptive with it. Joseph's story ended with his brothers bowing down before him, just as he had dreamed when he was a boy. When he revealed himself to them—the betrayed little brother now Pharaoh's right-hand man—they were convinced that Joseph would kill them.... But, on the contrary, it is just at that moment in the Bible that we come to the book's first use of the word forgive. Joseph's brothers asked for forgiveness, and Joseph extended it." *

- Imagine you're one of Joseph's brothers. Joseph said he forgave you, but you know what you did. The family patriarch, whose authority might have held Joseph back, just died. Would you still be afraid of what might happen? Joseph had a different outlook. "Had his brothers not sold him into slavery... he would not have been in this position to save his family. Joseph was able to look back and see God's hand working through all the things that had happened." ** Even more, this was an early chapter in the vast Biblical saga of God's salvation. "Joseph is the first great embodiment of [Romans 8:28](#).... the good God brings out of these experiences is not just the good it brings Joseph... but the good it brings his family. That is not the end of it.... This is the family through which God is going to bring blessing to the world.... We as twenty-first-century readers owe our salvation to the fact that God kept this family alive (so that Jesus could be born from it) and used Joseph's suffering to that end." *** Do you trust God to be as creative and redemptive in your life as in Joseph's?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for forgiving me, many times. Let your forgiveness "go viral" in my life, shaping all my relationships and attitudes. Amen.

* Hamilton, Adam, *Forgiveness: Finding Peace Through Letting Go* (pp. 122-123). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

** *Ibid.*, p. 121.

*** John Goldingay, *Genesis for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 17–50*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010, p. 161.

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