

Read: Genesis 50:15-21

Joseph Forgave as God Does

Genesis 50:15,19-21

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and will pay us back in full for all of the evil that we did to him."
...Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring this to pass and to keep many people alive, as it is this day. Now therefore, do not be afraid. I will nourish you and your little ones."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"I forgive you." Those three words are some of the most powerful words you can say to someone. Those three words can also be some of the most unexpected words, especially if someone expects you to be angry with them.

Centuries ago, there was a family with twelve brothers. One brother named Joseph was his father's favorite. His father showered him with extra gifts and extra attention. The young man daily reminded his brothers that he was the favorite. Soon the brothers were jealous, so jealous that some even considered ending their brother's life. Instead, they did something just as awful. They sold him into slavery. He would be taken far away, owned by someone else, and forced to do their will. The brothers thought they would never see Joseph again, but God had other plans.

Years later, a terrible famine struck the land where that family lived. They did not have enough food for their families or their animals. The only place where food was available was the kingdom of Egypt. While there to purchase food, the brothers met a harsh ruler. Little did they realize that ruler was their younger brother Joseph. He was testing them to see if their hearts had changed. They had. With hugs and tears, Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers. He provided a new home for his family. Even his elderly father came to Egypt. After his father died, the brothers started to worry. "Now that Dad is dead, will Joseph punish us for how we wronged him years ago?"

The brothers came to Joseph and even offered to be his slaves, but Joseph did something unexpected. He told them, "I forgive you." He reminded them that they had no need to fear because God had other plans. God had taken their harmful acts and turned them into good. Many lives were saved, including their own, because the Lord brought Joseph to Egypt.

Do we forgive others like Joseph forgave his brothers? When someone says something unkind or does something mean to you, you might want to see them suffer at that moment. They

deserve it, right? But God does not punish you as you deserve for your sins. God punished Jesus instead. Jesus suffered the consequences in your place so God would tell you, “I forgive you.” So, do not hold a grudge against a person who has wronged you. Instead, forgive them as God has forgiven you.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- What did Joseph’s brothers do to him that was so horrible?
- Instead of being angry, how did Joseph show love for his brothers?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Explain what it means to hold a grudge.
- How did God change the brothers’ sins against Joseph into a blessing?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- How do you respond to someone who says, “Everyone should get what they deserve”?
- Pray out loud with your parents the Lord’s Prayer. Which words remind us forgive someone?

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, you are merciful and gracious. You forgive our sins though we do not deserve it. Help us to forgive those who sin against us as you have forgiven us. Amen.

Hymn: CW 384:3,4 – By Grace I’m Saved

By grace! Oh, mark this word of promise when you are by your sins oppressed,
When Satan plagues your troubled conscience, and when your heart is seeking rest.
What reason cannot comprehend God by his grace to you did send.

By grace to timid hearts that tremble, in tribulation’s furnace tried—
By grace, despite all fear and trouble, the Father’s heart is open wide.
Where could I help and strength secure if grace were not my anchor sure?